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THE DEMAGOGUE
AND LADY PHAYRE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

IDOLS
DERELICTS
THE USURPER
WHERE LOVE IS
THE WHITE DOVE
A STUDY IN SHADOWS
THE BELOVED VAGABOND
AT THE GATE OF SAMARIA
THE MORALS OF MARCUS ORDEYNE

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THE DEMAGOGUE AND LADY PHAYRE.

BY

WILLIAM J. LOCKE



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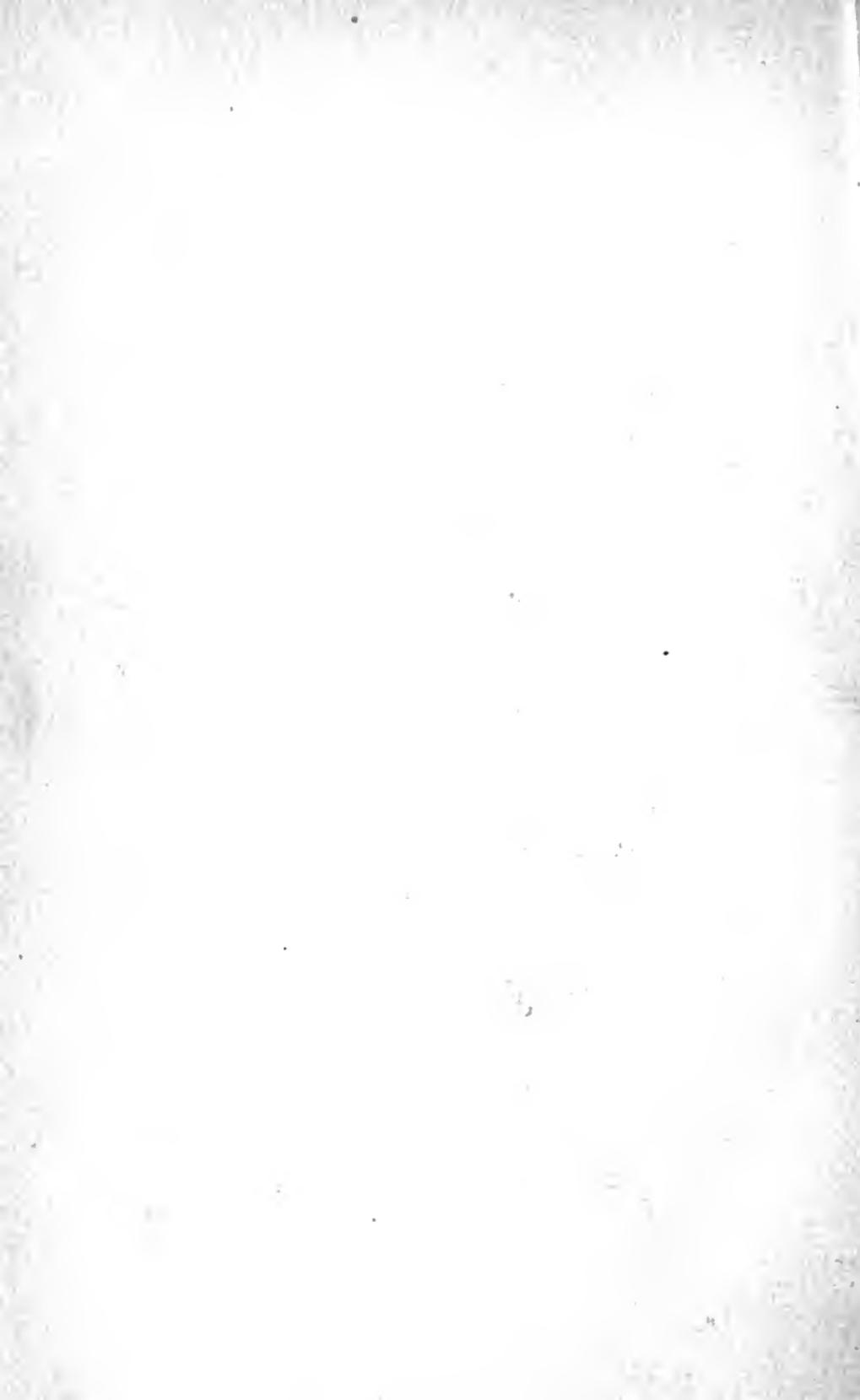
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The Demagogue and Lady Phayre

CHAPTER I

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

"If you are coming my way, Goddard, we may as well walk back together," said the Member, putting on his fur-lined coat.

Mr. Aloysius Gleam, member for Sunington, was a spare, precisely dressed little man on the hither side of forty. He was somewhat bald, and clean-shaven all to a tightly-screwed fair moustache. A gold-rimmed eye-glass added a quaint air of alertness to a shrewd, sharp-featured face.

Goddard acquiesced readily, although on this particular evening his road lay in a different direction. But democrat though he was, he felt flattered by Mr. Gleam's friendly proposal. He was young—eight and twenty, a cabinetmaker by trade, self-taught and consequently self-opinionated, yet humble enough before evident superiority of knowledge or experience. Besides, in coming to take the chair at his lecture on The New Trades

Unionism, before the Sunington Radical Club, the Member had paid him a decided compliment. A member of Parliament has many pleasanter and more profitable ways of spending a precious spare evening during a busy session.

They formed a singular contrast as they stood side by side in the little knot of committee-men who had remained behind after the audience had left. Goddard was above the middle height, squarely built, deep-chested, large-limbed ; his decent workman's clothes hung loosely upon him. His features were dark and massive, chin and forehead square, nose somewhat fleshy, mouth shutting stubbornly with folds at the sides ; the lip, on which, like the rest of his face, no hair grew, rather long ; altogether it was a powerful face, showing a nature capable of strong passions both for good and evil. The accident of straight black hair generally falling across his forehead, and a humorous setting of his eyes, relieved the face of harshness. At the present moment it was alive with the frankness of youth, and flushed with the success that had attended his lecture.

The group walked slowly down the hall through the chairs, and lingered for a moment at the club-house door. It was a new quarter of London. Mr. Aloysius Gleam had lived in the neighbourhood most of his life, and had seen it spring up from fields and market-gardens into a bustling town, with arteries fed from the life-stream of Oxford Street and the Strand. Its development had been dear to him. There was strong local

feeling, and he was deservedly popular. It was therefore some time before he could break away from his supporters. At last he did so, and started with Goddard at a brisk pace up the High Street.

"I have been wondering," he said, after a short silence, "whether you would care to take to politics seriously."

"I hope you don't think I'm playing at it," replied Goddard.

"Tut! don't be so confoundedly touchy," said Gleam good-humouredly. "By 'seriously' I meant entirely, professionally. Would you like to devote all your time to the work?"

"I should think I would," replied Goddard quickly; "but I can't. I have my bread and butter to earn. I don't quite see why you ask me."

"Would you accept a position if your bread and butter were assured to you?"

"As a paid agitator? Oh no, thanks! I couldn't stand that. Work of that sort must be given, not sold."

"That's rubbish," said the Member lightly. "The labourer is worthy of his hire. The notion is as cranky as Tolstoi's."

"It isn't," said Goddard. "The paid agitator is a fraud. He pretends to be a working-man and he isn't. When I address a crowd I can say, 'I am one of yourselves, the real thing. I belong to the Amalgamated Union of Cabinet-makers, and earn my forty bob a week with the work of my hands.' Men listen to me, and

respect me. What I could not swallow would be for a fellow to get up and tell me, 'It's all very well for you to talk ; but you're paid for talking, and make a jolly good thing of it. Instead of helping the working-man, you are simply growing fat on the working-man's hard-earned money.' I've heard that said to paid agitators myself."

"Well, who said I wanted you to become a paid agitator ?" asked Gleam. "I don't want you to stand on a barrel and address people as 'fellow-sufferers.' You are a cut above that kind of thing. What I wanted to propose to you was work on our new National Progressive League. Of course, scores of men are giving their services ; but they are men of a certain amount of leisure. They can afford it. The working-man has no leisure to speak of, and we would give anything for the services of a few well-educated, clear-headed working-men like yourself. We could manage three pounds a week—perhaps more. Well, there's a chance for you."

Goddard walked on a few steps in silence. He was young, earnest, a passionate champion of the great questions on the Progressive programme. He felt in himself a power to grip the attention of men. He had dreamed vague dreams of personal ambition. Gleam's offer was a great temptation. But the consciousness that it was a temptation made him adhere all the more obstinately to his principles.

"You are very kind," he said at last, "and I am flattered by your opinion of me. But I

shouldn't feel justified in giving up my trade : it wouldn't seem right."

"Well, do as you like, my good fellow," replied the Member cheerily. "But I think you're a bit of an idiot. You'll find a thousand first-rate cabinetmakers for one competent politician. Anyhow, if you change your mind——"

"I don't like changing my mind," returned Goddard, with a laugh, "as if it were a shirt."

"We are none of us infallible, not even the youngest," quoted the Member below his breath.

But, taking a broad view of youth, he forbore to rebuke the young man, and turned the conversation upon certain points in the recently delivered lecture. When he reached his turning he shook hands and disappeared.

Goddard looked at his watch, and gave a little whistle of dismay. An omnibus from the west lumbered up. Goddard climbed on to the roof, and returned down the High Street. At the "Golden Stag," where the 'bus route ended, he descended, and proceeded almost at a run down some side streets and lanes, and eventually knocked at a door in a row of workmen's cottages.

"Well, you *are* late," said a girl who opened the door to him. "I've been waiting with my 'at on for the last three-quarters of an hour. No; you ain't going to kiss me. If you'd wanted to do that, you'd have found your way here before."

"I've come as fast as I could, Lizzie," said the young man, somewhat out of breath. "But I

went back part of the way with Mr. Gleam, who wanted to speak to me."

"That's all very fine," said Lizzie. "But I think I count for something."

She led the way into a little front room, where a couple of girls were busy with dressmaking. One of them was bending over a sewing-machine. Bits of stuff and patterns littered the table. A few spotted fashion-plates adorned the walls. The air was heavy with the smell of new mercery.

"Here's Dan at last!" said Lizzie. "It's only a case of how d'ye do and good-bye. These are my two cousins. This one's Emily, and that's Sophie. Oh, look at the clock! It is a shaime!"

Goddard shook hands with the two cousins of his affianced—pale, anemic girls, who giggled a little, while Lizzie saw to the straightness of her hat in the gilt mirror over the mantelpiece. When that was done, she admired herself for a moment. She was pretty—with the devil's prettiness; fluffy fair hair, a pink complexion and small, watery blue eyes—a poetic but discarded admirer had termed them "liquid azure," which had pleased her mightily. Her mouth had a ripe way of pouting that took the edge off tart speeches, at any-rate in a lover's opinion, but otherwise it was loose and devoid of character.

"I can't let him stop to talk," she said, turning to her cousins. "Father'll be in an awful stew. I'll bring him round another day."

"If he'll come," said Emily, the elder of the two.

"Oh, of course I will," said Goddard. "I'm very pleased to make your acquaintance."

He was feeling somewhat abashed amid these feminine surroundings, and laughed awkwardly. When the door closed behind Lizzie and himself he was relieved.

"I hope you are not vexed with me, Lizzie," he said humbly. "I really did not know it was so late."

"It's no use talking about it," said Lizzie in an injured tone. "But just let me keep you waiting, and see how you'd like it."

However, after a time, Lizzie was mollified, and in token thereof drew Daniel's arm, correctly loverwise, within her own.

"The lecture was a great success," he said at length. "Many more people than I had expected. I wish you had been there. Only they don't admit ladies."

"What was it about? Politics, wasn't it?"

"Yes—broadly speaking. Strictly it was on the New Trades Unionism. I traced its development, you know, showing how the spirit has changed. The Old Trades Unions were intensely jealous of State interference, because they looked upon the Government as the natural enemy of labour. But now labour is a powerful element in the State, and means to legislate for itself, and so make State-control the very bulwark of its rights. Of course I went into all kinds of details, but that was the general run of it."

"It must have been awfully clever," said Lizzie, without much enthusiasm.

"Oh, I don't know," laughed the young man. "I was a little nervous at first. You see I have spoken often enough, both at the club and in the open air, and then the words come naturally. You get warmed up, you know, and you let them have it straight. But this is the first time I've given a set lecture in cold blood, where everything has got to be expressed in chosen language—but it went very well. Mr. Gleam told me I was quite academic."

"He's a great swell, isn't he?" asked Lizzie. "Drives his carriage and pair, and lives in the big house with the griffins on the front gates. And you walked back with him?"

"Only to the top of the street," replied Goddard, still sounding an apologetic note. "He wanted to ask me whether I would throw up the workshop and become a paid agent of the National Progressive League."

"Oh, how nice!" said Lizzie.

"Yes, it was nice of him," replied Goddard; "but, of course, I declined."

"Oh, Daniel! How could you? It would have been so much more genteel."

The word jarred upon him. It set the matter in a new light, and made it look very ugly. Besides, it afforded him a not very satisfactory peep into Lizzie's spiritual horizon.

"You don't mind my being a working-man, do you, Lizzie?" he asked, with some reproach.

"Oh, never mind. What's the odds? We needn't trouble about it. If you like to wear a dirty apron and have your 'ands all covered over with varnish and turpentine, I'm sure I don't care."

She tossed her head, and drew a little away from him, so that only his fingers touched her arm.

"I don't think we need discuss that," said Goddard stiffly—"unless you think I am not good enough for you. In that case you might as well tell me at once."

"Now you're unkind," said Lizzie.

They walked a few steps in silence, and then Lizzie pulled out a pocket-handkerchief and dabbed her eyes. The young man's heart softened miraculously. He slid back his arm beneath hers, and drew her a little closer.

"I didn't mean to hurt you, Liz. Indeed, I didn't. What can I do to say I'm sorry?"

"You think I don't care for you," whimpered Lizzie. "Every one knows I gave up Joe Forster just for you; and he's got his own tobacco business and keeps an assistant."

The main part of which statement was not exactly in accordance with facts. But Goddard was not in the current of local gossip, and did not suspect his sweetheart's veracity.

"Then you'll forgive me, and we'll make it up?"

"You don't want to break it off?"

"I? Good gracious, no. Why, Liz!"

There was another pause. They were in the middle of the High Street. Knots of loafers hung around the blazing entrances of the public-houses, but otherwise the pavement was more or less deserted.

"Why don't you put your arm round my waist, then?" said Lizzie softly.

Goddard did as he was bidden. She laughed out loud at his shy awkwardness, and pulled his fingers tighter round her figure.

"One'd say I was the only girl you'd ever walked out with."

"Well, you are," replied Goddard simply. "I never bothered much with girls till I knew you."

"I believe that's a cracker," said Lizzie, who was beginning to enjoy the walk.

"It isn't, indeed. I swear it's true."

"Oh! How can you? Well, if it's true it oughtn't to have been. You ought to have had some one to practise on, and then you would have learned to do things nicely. Practice makes perfect, you know."

A light argument followed, which ended in Goddard's discomfiture, and left him with a vague feeling that he had missed one of the duties of man in letting his talent for love-making lie dormant, and also an uneasy wonder at the extent of Lizzie's familiarity with the subject. But Lizzie was quite happy.

"You wouldn't like any other girl, would you?"

She rested her head slightly against him. The glare of an electric-lighted shop-front fell on her pretty, upturned face, and the young man forgot everything, save that she had soft puckered lips and young, even teeth.

They were reconciled as far as harmony was ever possible between their natures. The rest of the walk home was undisturbed, and when they arrived at Lizzie's door they were well pleased with each other. She opened the door with her latch-key and, holding it ajar, received his kiss prettily, and then with a desire to complete the reconciliation in all ways, said—

“I’m glad you decided to remain a working-man, Dan. I can’t bear them silly politics.”

She disappeared quickly. Dan remained for a moment looking vaguely at the knocker, as if to address it in confidential remonstrance; and then turning away, he let himself into the adjoining house, and slowly mounted the stairs to his room, with an all-pervading sense of the strange futility of the female mind.

CHAPTER II

A REVOLUTION

SHE was the one thing feminine that had come across his path. He had stared at it like a new Adam. His original Eden lay at the back of the houses, and was divided by a low wall. Here, first, he used to lean, in his shirt-sleeves, pipe in mouth, on the late summer evenings, and exchange remarks with her as she removed the washing from the clothes' lines, or idly took the air. How he had drifted into his present relations he would have found it difficult to determine. It never occurred to him to do so, his mind being filled with other things.

By degrees he had familiarised himself with the fact of her existence. Then it seemed natural that he should marry her. In his social sphere a wife formed a necessary part of everyday existence. And then she was the prettiest girl he had ever seen. When he kissed the pouting lips, all kinds of strange tinglings ran through him. That was proof positive of his being in love. So one day he called on her father, a retired captain of a Thames steamboat, and obtained his consent to the marriage. He was earning good wages, had even a little put by. The old man, whose tastes

were not of a domestic order, and who found a daughter an expensive luxury, got solemnly drunk all by himself to celebrate the occasion. Goddard considered him an abandoned old ruffian, as soon as he came to know more about him, and conceiving a tender pity for Lizzie, longed to get her out of his clutches.

It was hard work to carry on his trade, his self-education, his political pursuits, and his love-making, all at the same time. The last was distinctly pleasant, but it was sadly lacking in advantages from a utilitarian point of view. Until he had fallen in love with her over that back-garden wall, he had scouted the idea of "messing about" with girls as a criminal waste of precious hours. Even now he felt somewhat guilty. He longed to be married, to settle down, to have Lizzie's pretty face at his fireside definitely assured to him for the rest of his days, and to see before him a peaceful, undisturbed stretch of years wherein to further with all his heart and energies the great movement in which he was absorbed.

Perhaps Lizzie was right. A little previous practice in the art of love would have been for his good; but in a widely different sense from that which came within Lizzie's philosophy.

A few evenings after he had given the lecture at the Radical Club, he took her to the theatre. Some weeks previously he had treated her to the Lyceum, not doubting in the guilelessness of his heart that her æsthetic appreciation would be as great as his own. But she had been bored to

death, had come home cross, and the subject of play-going became a dangerous one. This time, however, by way of compensation, it was the Adelphi. Lizzie laughed and wept and squeezed Daniel's arm, and enjoyed herself amazingly. She did not know with whom she was the more delighted, Mr. William Terriss or Daniel. On the top of the homeward 'bus she decided in favour of Daniel. She nestled close to him on the garden-seat, and brought his arm round her. Then she drew off her well-worn glove, so as to put her bare hand in his. He was touched, tightened his circling arm, and bent down his head till the fluffy fair curls brushed his lips.

"Why don't you hug me oftener, Dan?" she murmured. "Like this. It makes me feel much more homey with you."

"We are not always on top of a 'bus," said Dan.

She gave him a little nudge to show him that she appreciated his jest, but she went on—

"I don't mind your kissing me, Dan. I like it. Now we're engaged you ought to be awfully spoony, you know, and squeeze me, and tell me how lovely I look, and all that."

They were on the front seat of the 'bus; the people behind did not count as spectators; the hurrying roadway and crowded pavement below were remote as the clear-shining stars above. Daniel surrendered to the coaxing murmur, and kissed her a long lover's kiss. When an inspector, a short time afterwards, demanded

their tickets, Goddard forgot his Collectivist principles and became a fierce Individualist.

"What a confounded nuisance—these fellows disturbing us! It oughtn't to be allowed," he said, resettling himself. And Lizzie acquiesced.

Towards the end of the journey they grew silent. Lizzie, tired, dozed with her head on his shoulder. A sudden jolt of the 'bus awakened her. She laughed, and rubbed her eyes.

"I do believe I've been asleep. What have you been doing all the time?"

"Thinking," he replied, smiling at the question.

"What of?"

"Well, I was thinking of my speech on Saturday in Hyde Park, you know. There is an Eight Hour demonstration, and the League people have asked me to take a platform. I'm becoming quite an important person, you see, Liz."

"I thought you were going to say you'd been thinking of me," said Lizzie, piqued. "I call that beastly of you."

It took him all the time until they parted to re-establish the "spoony" relations that alone, according to Lizzie, seemed to make for happiness between them.

But when he went to bed that night he found himself wondering for the first time whether his political interests might not cause serious friction between Lizzie and himself. To give them up was out of the question. Vague doubts came as to the wisdom of the step he was about to take.

They troubled him, kept him from sleep for some hours.

But before he could give the question fuller thought, new and undreamed of conditions arose that changed the whole aspect of his life.

It was a couple of days afterwards. He sat in a solicitor's office staring at a little whiskered gentleman, whose even voice seemed to come from some other world. He had called in response to a letter, bringing with him the few documents he possessed—his dead mother's marriage certificate, his own birth certificate, and his old indentures of apprenticeship. He had thought it a question of some trifling legacy on the part of the dead uncle whom he had never known, who had disowned his mother because she had brought disgrace on the family by marrying Sam Goddard the builder. He had conjectured that the hard old heart that had stonily refused succour to widowed sister had melted before his death, and had sought to make some little posthumous reparation to his sister's son. Save that Robert Haig was a well-to-do hosier in Birmingham, Goddard knew nothing at all about him. But when the little whiskered man announced that this unknown uncle had died, wifeless, childless, and intestate, that he, Goddard, was the next-of-kin, and inherited, not only the business as it stood, but a considerable sum of invested money, that brought in between four and five hundred a year, he stared, open-mouthed, in blank amazement, and

it was some time before he could recover his bewildered faculties.

"Is there no one who has a better right to all this money than I?" he asked, after a while.

"Not a soul. Since the death of his wife and daughter the late Mr. Haig had neither kith nor kin besides yourself."

"How did you find my whereabouts?"

It seemed to him as if he were living for the moment the irresponsible life of comic opera.

"Simplest thing in the world," replied the lawyer. "Your mother's letters were found docketed amongst Mr. Haig's papers. The last one, appealing to him for help on the occasion of your father's death, contained the address of the firm of cabinetmakers to whom you were indentured. They gave us your present address."

Goddard rose from his chair, and made one or two turns about the room.

"It's difficult to realise it all at once," he said, stopping before the solicitor. "But I think I have grasped it now. What would you advise me to do?"

"You had better go as soon as possible to Birmingham and see our principals, Messrs. Taylor & Blythe. We are only acting for them, you know. They will be able to go into fuller details with you, particularly in the matter of the hosiery business."

"They'll have to sell that," said Goddard quickly. "It would be a white elephant to me."

"I should strongly dissuade you from parting with it," said the lawyer. "It appears to be a going concern. You should keep it on. Work it up. You would soon get into the way of it."

"And turn hosier? Oh no! I'm proud of my handicraft, and I would go on with it if there were any necessity. But to wear a long frock-coat, and sell collars and neckties behind a counter—I am afraid I wasn't made for it."

He laughed at the vision of himself. The lawyer smiled too. The dark, heavily-cut face, with its great forehead and bright clever eyes, giving its promise of strength and intellect, seemed fitted for more strenuous work than shrewd buying and polite selling of hosiery.

"Well, you'll think it over," said the lawyer.

"Yes," said Goddard. "It strikes me I have a deal of thinking to do the next few days."

He got into a District train to return to the workshop, from which he had obtained a couple of hours' leave of absence. The journey passed in a dream. The fortune that had befallen him seemed almost beyond his powers of realisation. The prospective changes in his life presented themselves before him in quick succession—the suggestion of one leading to the shock of another. His trade would be abandoned, unless he chose to continue it as a hobby. He need never do an hour's work again as long as he lived. He could live in a comfortable house of his own, surround himself with books—an endless vista of shelf upon shelf quivered before his eyes. The pos-

session of such an income demanded changes in habits, food, raiment. It gave infinite leisure. And then a thought that had gradually been piercing through the cloud of his bewilderment broke out like a sun over his mind, causing his heart to leap in a thrilling delight, as a great life-work was revealed to him. He no longer need stand at the brink of the great struggle, lending a helping hand in all too few hours of leisure. He could plunge into the very midst, fight for the cause of the people with all his brain and heart and energies. His face flushed, and his breath came quickly. It was a chilly day, and a man seated opposite to him in the third-class carriage was surprised to see him wipe the perspiration from his forehead.

And then there was Lizzie. He would tell her that evening. He pictured to himself the ecstatic wonder on her pretty face. But the greater passion held him, and Lizzie's face floated vaguely behind the flashing dreams of work and struggle and victories.

At the workshop he sought his employer, but the latter was absent. Goddard took off his coat, put on his apron, rolled up his sleeves, and turned to the fitting of the writing-table on which he had been engaged that morning. The feeling that he was doing this familiar thing for the last time made it appear strangely unreal. His tool-bag seemed no longer to belong to him. He had given it, in his mind, to the young apprentice who was working at his side. He joined in the

desultory chat and jesting of his companions with the ready good humour that had always made him popular among them ; but his brain throbbed with the effort of self-control. He worked steadily, with the deft, sure touch of the skilled craftsman. The pigeon-hole slides ran into the grooves without a hairbreadth deviation, the little secret panel ran in and out without the hitch that a grain of dust could have made. It was gratifying to him to be able to put the finishing touches to a piece of work he had undertaken. When he had done, he passed his hand caressingly over the polished curves of the sliding cover. He was proud of his craft. It was a beautiful thing that had shaped itself under his touch.

"If all the work I do in the future," he thought, "is as perfect of its kind as this, I need fear no rivals."

It was over. He had had a pleasant interview with his employer, had received the hearty congratulations of his mates, who, after the manner understood of the British workman, drank to his health and prosperity at a neighbouring tavern. He had bidden farewell to the trade in which he had found so much honest happiness. Again the sense of unreality came over him. The change had come so suddenly, so unexpectedly. That morning he had risen a poor artisan ; he would lie down that night the owner of fabulous wealth, which he was going to Bir-

mingham the next day to claim. In spite of the strong will that strove to repress extravagant fancies, and to put matters in a common-sense, practical light, his imagination slipped elusively from his control, and ran riot amid the courts and halls of airy palaces.

CHAPTER III

THE END OF AN ACT

MR., or, as he loved to be designated, Captain Jenkyns, had once followed the sea. But that was a long time ago. The serious part of his life had been spent on a Thames steamer. The outer man was nautical, and the carnal inner, as an inveterate craving for fiery drink clearly proved ; but many years of fresh water seemed to have washed the true sailor's kindly salt out of his nature. He was a thick-set, grizzled old man, with bibulous superannuation written on every wrinkle that mounted to his little red-rimmed eyes, and in every filament of the network of tiny red veins on his nose.

He was sitting in the leatheren arm-chair, with his back to the parlour window, drinking his tea out of a saucer. Goddard and Lizzie sat decorously at the tea-table. It was a ceremonious occasion, as the use of the parlour, the potted ham and seed-cake on the table, Captain Jenkyns's brass-buttoned coat, and the little blue ribbon round Lizzie's neck, with the bow tied kittenishly under her ear, all combined to testify. Previously Goddard used to join the domestic circle in the

kitchen, but then he had never been to Birmingham nor opened a banking account at the City Bank. That made all the difference.

So far, conversation had not been animated. Goddard had conducted it practically alone, sketching his visit to Birmingham, which had terminated to his complete satisfaction. An offer for the shop and good-will was already under consideration. The solicitors had advanced him a good round sum for present needs.

"To keep a shop warn't good enough for yer, I suppose," Captain Jenkyns had remarked in his agreeable way.

"No," Goddard had answered coldly—he did not love the captain. "It wasn't."

And then he had proceeded with his story. But the talk languished. Lizzie, never expansive in her father's presence, was less so to-day than usual. Goddard's sudden accession to wealth—riches beyond the dreams of Lizzie's avarice—somewhat awed her, after the first excitement had passed. His cleverness, his personality, all in fact that differentiated him from Joe Forster the tobacconist and his class, had always put him a little beyond her reach; but now that he was a rich man as well, she felt frightened and abashed. She offered him bread and butter timidly, and flushed scarlet when she awkwardly flooded his tea-cup. Then crumbs of cake went the wrong way, and she retired to the window to hide her discomfiture.

"And now you're a hind-independent gentleman."

said the old man after a pause, setting down his saucer. "I suppose you won't want to be thinking of marrying my gell."

Goddard sprang to his feet. He had his own reasons for feeling stung to the quick.

"You have no right to say that," he cried hotly. "What do you take me for?"

The ex-captain made the motion of "Ease her!" with his hand, and chuckled.

"Do you think I don't know human natur', when I've seed boat-loads of it every day for sixty years?"

"Well, you don't know my nature," said Daniel. "Lizzie, come here. We'll soon settle that matter."

Lizzie turned from the window and advanced towards him, flushing uncomfortably.

"Damme! I don't want you to marry her. I don't care a tinker's damn," said the old man with unreasonable heat, as Goddard met Lizzie and took her by the hand. "I ain't going down on my bended knees to ask you to marry her."

"Oh, father! don't," said Lizzie on the brink of tears.

"Never mind," said Goddard. "I want to marry you, and I'm going to marry you. I'll have the banns put up next Sunday."

"Why don't you have a special licence at once?" growled the Captain sarcastically.

"Because I know my own business best," said Goddard.

"Then I'm blarsted if you'll have her at all!"

"Don't make a scene, father," Lizzie entreated. She tried to slip away, but Goddard's arm tightened and restrained her. He looked with disgust on the ignoble old face that blinked in cantankerous dignity. Save on the ground of pure ill-temper he could not understand his outburst. Lizzie had often told him of the awful rows she had had with her father about nothing at all. But Goddard was not the man to be bullied.

"Lizzie is over twenty-one, and I'm going to marry her whether you are blasted or not, Captain Jenkyns. You can take that from me."

"Then you're a — er fool than I took you for," replied the Captain, giving in beneath the young fellow's strong gaze. "Marry in haste; repent at leisure. You want to make a lady of her. She ain't going to be no lady. It's only going to set her off her 'ead. Think she's going to recognise her poor old father when she lives in a fine 'ouse and dressed in silks and satins? Not a bit of it. I know human natur', I tell yer. I brought her up to be an honest working man's wife. That's what she's fit for. So that she could give me a bit of dinner on Sundays. Now you're a going to take her away from her natural surroundings, what she was born in, and make her neither flesh, nor fowl, nor good red 'erring. Think I don't know? And you, with your 'igh-falutin' idea about being too good to keep a shop, you ought to marry a duchess instead of a poor old sailor's gell: that's what you ought to do."

He produced a flat bottle of rum from his side

pocket, filled his half-emptied tea-cup with spirits, and drank the compound to console his poor old sailor's paternal heart.

Goddard, seeing that the storm was over, smiled at the mixture of shrewdness and selfishness in the old man's speech. Certain home-truths made him wince a little; but the prospect of Captain Jenkyns not finding a seat at his Sunday dinner-table did not present itself to him as in any way pathetic.

"Well," he said good-humouredly, "I am not going to marry a duchess, but a girl as sweet as one. Isn't that true, Liz? And so there's an end to the matter. I suppose I can count on you to give her away, Captain?"

"Yes, I'll give her away. Jolly good riddance," growled the old man.

A short while afterwards he rose, filled his clay pipe with cavendish, which he ground fine between his hands, and excusing himself on the score of business, left the two young people to themselves. His destination, however, was a far-off river-side public, where he spent the rest of the evening with his cronies, and informed them, in speech that grew gradually more marked by thickness and profanity, of the approaching splendour of his daughter's fortunes.

"Cheer up, Lizzie," said Goddard, as she began to clear away the tea-things in silence. "We neither of us mind what he says."

"He makes me so ashamed," said Lizzie. "I didn't know where to look. He's been at it ever

since you've been away, saying as how you would want to back out ; and he made me quite miserable, he did."

The baby-blue eyes filled with tears. Goddard consoled her as best he could.

"There, there, don't cry," he said, patting her shoulder with his great hand. "The banns will be put up next Sunday, as I said ; and three weeks won't be long, you know ; and then it will all be over, and we'll start fair. Leave those things alone for the present, and let us talk about it."

So they sat, side by side, over the fire, and spoke of the near future. They would live in lodgings until they could find a house to suit them. They discussed the size of the house, its position, the furniture, the question of servants. They came nearer the present, and Goddard counted out into her hand six crisp bank-notes wherewith to buy her trousseau. Lizzie's mind swam in ecstatic wonderment.

"All this—for me ?" she whispered, awe-stricken.

"Yes, and as much more if you like. I am going to get a new rig out, so why shouldn't you ?"

"Oh, Dan," she broke out suddenly, throwing her arms round his neck, "I didn't quite know whether I loved you before—but I do now—Dan!"

There followed an interlude, during which the future was left in abeyance.

"And I was wondering *how* I was going to get

a wedding-dress. Emmie and I have talked for hours over it. Won't I get a beauty now! White satin with a long, long train. I saw one yesterday in a fashion-plate—oh! just lovely."

"I suppose you won't feel married otherwise," he said, with a quiet smile. And then, seeing a quick shadow of dismay on her face, he laughed and kissed her. "You shall drive to the church in a coach and four, with the horses' manes and tails all tied up with orange-blossoms, if you like."

She saw he was jesting kindly, and joined in the laugh—but perfactorily. The wedding-dress was the ecstatic, enrapturing part of the ceremony. To jest upon it savoured of profanity.

After a while Lizzie returned to the tea-things, and, aided by Daniel, washed them up in the kitchen.

"Only fancy! I am going to have servants to do this for me ever afterwards," she said brightly.

The possession of the trousseau money had strongly influenced the girl's facile temperament. The changed fortune ceased to be shadowy and disquieting. It had assumed already a comforting, concrete form. The overwhelming realisation of the potential finery that lay in those crisp notes had crushed any feelings of delicacy in accepting the gift. The first wondering delight and childlike impulse of gratitude to Goddard was succeeded by a new sense of personal importance. Her garments would be dazzling—the thought of them raised her to a height whence

she could almost look down upon Daniel. She no longer felt shy or constrained.

They returned to the parlour, a prim little room, with a pervading impression of horse-hair, crocheted antimacassars, woolly mats and wax-fruit, and again envisaged the future. Lizzie sat in her father's arm-chair, her hands deliciously idle in her lap, her mind all transcendental millinery. Goddard rested his elbow on the table, pushed back his hair from his forehead, and looked at her gravely.

"It's not all going to be beer and skittles, you know, Liz," he said. "Although I have chucked the working-man, I am going in for precious hard work all the same."

"Why, whatever for, when you haven't your living to get?" she asked in surprise.

Like the apocryphal British workman, Lizzie hated work, and hated those that liked it. She saw no point in unnecessary labour.

"No," said Goddard, his face lighting up with the impulse of reply. "Not my own living to get, thank God, but I have to help others to get theirs. I may not be able to do much. But when a lot of men work together, every little effort of each tells. And I mean, too, to come to the front, Liz, for the nearer the front a man is, the bigger the things he can do. And the front means a big position in Parliament, and that's what I'm going to try and get before I die. If I don't, it won't be for want of fighting. But it will be a long time coming, and will take

me all I know. That's why I didn't take over the shop in Birmingham."

"Oh, that's why?" said Lizzie, trying to look sympathetic.

"Of course. You see it wasn't because I suddenly became too big for my boots—but I wanted all my time to myself for this other work. I have made a fair start. I know something about the inner workings of things already, and I can get men to listen to me when I speak. So I am going to work like a nigger, Liz."

She sat silent and plucked at her dress. It was very wonderful and clever of Daniel to talk about becoming a Member of Parliament, but she could not in the least see why it was necessary for him to work like a nigger. In her heart she regretted the hosier's shop, but she was afraid to tell him so. She looked up at him and smiled, with the outside of her features as it were, after the manner of dutiful yet uninterested woman. Goddard, encouraged, continued to unfold his schemes. He was in intense earnest, and spoke to her, as he had never spoken before, of the burning questions of the day—the unequal struggle between labour and capital, the iniquity of the living wage, the stupendous problem of the unemployed, the great reforms on whose behalf he felt summoned forth to fight. And as the passion grew upon him, his voice vibrated and his eyes glowed, and his words waxed eloquent. He broke the bonds of his usual speech with her, partly through a need of expansion,

partly through a half-conscious desire to awaken a little of the girl's sympathy.

When he had done, and a little pause had followed, she looked up from the puckering of her dress.

"That's all lovely, Dan," she said; "but what am I to do?"

The question brought his thoughts down from the empyrean like a gash in a balloon.

"Well, there will be the house to look after," he said, in an altered tone; "and then—well—there will be babies—and lots of things," he concluded lamely.

"Oh, I don't like babies," said Lizzie, with frank inconsequence. "They always want such a lot of fussing after, and they're always squalling. I'm sure I shall want to smack them. Nasty little things."

He looked at her rather perplexedly. It was a delicate subject. She caught his glance and coloured.

"You shouldn't go saying such things," she murmured, giggling in embarrassment—"and we not married yet!"

Then something seemed to catch him by the heart, a queer chilly grip, and tug it downwards. He blamed himself for having suggested the idea, although he had done so without shadowing thoughts. The innuendo jarred upon him—he could not tell why.

"I am sorry," he said gravely.

There was a silence for some time. Goddard

idly turned over the leaves of a rickety album filled with faded photographs of stiff, staring people in the costume of the sixties.

Lizzie lay back in her chair, and devised the white satin wedding-dress. At last she called to him softly.

"Dan."

He turned, saw her reclining there, smiling at him. Her cheeks were so pink, her fair hair so bewilderingly soft and fluffy, her parted lips so fresh and inviting, her young figure so cleanly cut, in spite of the ill-fitting dress and cheap corsets beneath, her white throat set off by the coquettish blue ribbon so alluring, that the heart of the young man, who knew little of the ways and fascinations of women, threw off the cold grip in a great quick throb.

"You haven't given me a kiss all the time, Dan," she said without stirring.

Well, he rose and kissed her.

And the next day he called on the vicar of the parish, and settled the question of the banns. It was over. He felt lighter. There is nothing that is more irksome to a strong-willed man than indecision, and Goddard had passed through a period of grave misgiving.

On his way down the path to the vicarage gate, however, he met Mr. Aloysius Gleam just entering it. The Member let fall his gold-rimmed eye-glass in some surprise, as he greeted him.

"What, more miracles? You in the house of Rimmon?" he exclaimed, for Goddard had

been a thorn in the vicar's flesh for some time past.

"I'm going to get married," replied Goddard, by way of explanation.

The Member drooped his shoulders and lowered the point of his stick in a helpless attitude, and looked at him with an air of dismay. "What are you doing it for? Just when you ought to be going round the country like a firebrand. Now you'll be a damp faggot. I know. Go back and tell the vicar you didn't mean it. It was an elaborate 'draw' on your part."

Daniel stuck his hands in his pockets and laughed.

"I feel inclined to answer you like Touchstone," he said.

"The deuce you do," said Gleam.

A quick glance passed between them, and a shade of annoyance came over Goddard's dark face. The analogy perhaps was closer than he intended. The other might retort with the gibes of Jacques.

"Of course it isn't my business," added Gleam in a deprecating tone. "But it might have been better for you to have waited—considering the change in your fortune, and your scheme of life generally. Well, I suppose folks will marry. It is even within the bounds of possibility I may do it myself one of these days."

He put up his eye-glass and passed his fingers over his tight fair moustache, as if to prepare himself for the ordeal.

"It won't interfere with any of our plans, I can assure you," said Goddard.

"That's right. Don't let it, for goodness' sake. But marriage is a function of two independent variables, as they say in the differential calculus—and a deuced tough function too. Anyhow, if you're bent upon it, I wish you luck."

They shook hands and parted. Goddard turned away slowly.

The Member's words sounded again the note of warning, the same note that had rung in those of the old man on the previous day, the same that had rung in his own ears.

"But I should have been a knave to have done differently," he thought to himself. "There was only one alternative."

He had deliberately chosen the part of the fool.

"I am damned glad," he said aloud, swinging his stick. "I'll walk straight, now and ever afterwards, whatever happens."

Three weeks afterwards they were married, and Lizzie's wedding-dress, to her trembling joy, was fully described in the *Sunington Weekly Chronicle*.

CHAPTER IV

LADY PHAYRE AND THE COMING MAN

"I WISH something new would happen," said Lady Phayre.

"There is the session just begun," replied Mr. Aloysius Gleam, drawing his arm-chair an inch nearer the fire. "We can promise you many New Year novelties."

"Call you them novelties?" asked Lady Phayre. "They will be as old as—as the ante-penultimate barrel-organ tune."

"You want to go too fast. Great political reforms move slowly."

"Yes, that is true—deadeningly true. I think I read it once in a newspaper."

Gleam laughed, and spread out his hands before the blaze. He was familiar with her mood—a mild spiritual unrest, induced by supreme bodily comfort and intellectual disturbance. He had the faculty of the æsthetic as well as ultra-democratic tendencies, and he appreciated the harmony between her mood and the dim afternoon hour with its gathering shadows in corners of the room. Her comfortable attitude, with one hand hanging over the arm of the chair; her costume, a dark fur-edged tea-gown;

expression of wistful meditation—all betokened a relaxation of fibre trying to pamper itself into depression. So the Member laughed, and a smile played round his clean-shaven lips in the silence that followed.

The politician within the esoteric revolutionary ring, who did not know Lady Phayre, was like a Positivist ignorant of Auguste Comte. The analogy halts, however. Lady Phayre was far from being an evangelist; she was not even an apostle. She had been left with the key of a pleasant situation, and, like a wise woman, she used it. Her enemies called her insincere. If the late Sir Ephraim, they said, had sat as a Conservative, and had formed the cartilage as it were of a brilliant wing of that party, Lady Phayre's flat would have become an audaciously unauthorised Primrose Habitation. But political opponents will say anything.

Certainly she took no combative part in political warfare. Her functions were rather those of an etherealised *vivandière* to the band. The members came exhausted into her drawing-room, where she revived them with pannikins of sympathy, and spread the delicate ointment of flattery over their bruises. Not but what she exposed herself in times of need to the dangers and fatigues of the campaign. She had risked typhoid in slums, and congestion of the lungs in draughty halls. She also kept bravely up with the march, picking her dainty way through prodigious quantities of speeches, pamphlets, and articles, both

in type and manuscript. Now and then she stumbled sorely. Bimetallism was a morass, and trade statistics stone fences. On these occasions she would cry out for a helping hand, preferably that of Aloysius Gleam; after which she would survey herself with rueful introspection, and put to herself the question addressed to the immortal Scapin.

Her mood of to-day followed one of these periodic rescuings.

"Hendrick's amendment is coming on this evening," said Aloysius Gleam at last. "The audacity of it is novel enough. Come down. It will amuse you. Burnet has a lady's ticket going a-begging."

"I have had enough of Hendrick for some time," replied Lady Phayre. "He took me down to dinner last night at the M'Kays', and could talk of nothing else. I wish you could put some sense into him."

"I wish I could. But a Collectivist who has broken loose is running headlong to destruction."

"That was what I told him. Push Collectivism to its logical conclusion, and we get Mr. Bellamy's intolerable paradise. He got purple in the face, said he was nothing if not logical, insisted on the establishment of comparative values for different kinds of labour and products, and called me a reactionary because I asked him how the State was going to determine the number of mutton chops that would go to a sonnet."

"Is that phrase your own, Lady Phayre?" asked Gleam, pricking up his ears.

"No," she replied, with a little touch of audacity. "I snapped it up as an unconsidered trifle out of a review article."

"Goddard's, I think, on Extremism as applied to Practical Politics."

"You are an encyclopædia," said Lady Phayre, laughing. "You know everything."

"Did you like the article?"

"Immensely. I detached it from the review, and restitched it with blue ribbon to use as a text-book. Without it I might have been led to destruction by Hendrick."

"Ah, my dear Lady Phayre—I shall not tell it in Gath; but when are you going to have views of your own?"

"Views? Of course I have views," said Lady Phayre, comfortably reversing the crossing of her feet, "just like everybody else, only theirs are fixed and mine are—dissolving. It gives greater variety to life. But I think the Goddard view will be lasting."

"I shall tell him. He will be flattered."

"Oh, you know him?"

"Pretty intimately. I may say that I trained him—in the sporting, not the pedagogic sense."

"You never told me. Have you many more lights under your bushel?"

"A dazzling illumination of unsuspected virtues. But I didn't do very much for Goddard except put him in the way of things; and he

would have come to the front right enough without me. He is the coming man of the younger school of Progressists. The anomaly of his generation—a hot reformer with luminous common-sense—a popular demagogue with an idea of proportion—an original thinker—a powerful, eloquent speaker. Look at the work he has done on the Council, the Progressive League—ramifications spreading all over the country with organised courses of lectures on civism, social economics, and what not. Decidedly the coming man."

"It does one good to see you enthusiastic," cried Lady Phayre with a laugh. "Your criticisms are generally more bracing than genial. But why don't I know Goddard?"

"He surely has not sprung suddenly into your horizon?"

"Of course not. The newspapers—general talk—I know all about him that way. I meant, why don't I know him personally?"

There was a touch of reprimand in the "why." Gleam was Lord Chamberlain in Ordinary to her ladyship.

"I was waiting until he got into the House at the next general election. You see, until seven years ago, when he came into some money that rendered him independent, he was a carpenter or something—no, cabinetmaker—and so, to be frank, I never thought of it."

"And you call yourself a Radical! Well, what is the matter with him? Does he wear

corduroys tied up at the knees, and carry a red pocket-handkerchief in his hat?"

"Oh dear no!" exclaimed Gleam hastily. "He is presentable. I told you of a little training—"

"Well, then, lose no time in bringing him," said Lady Phayre. "He surely must have heard of me."

She was proud of her position: somewhat jealous of it too. That a generation of Progressists should arise which knew not Lady Phayre was a dreadful contingency. She had a prescriptive right to the homage of the coming man of the wing. Besides, an ex-cabinetmaker whose views on social polity she had thought worth while to tie up with blue ribbon was a novelty.

Aloysius Gleam took his leave. At the door he was summoned to pause.

"He won't walk up and down the room and shake his finger at me, will he?"

"Like Fenton?" he laughed. "No, you can reassure your nerves. By the way," he cried suddenly, "there is a large meeting at Stepney next week, Thursday, at which Goddard is going to speak, and I have promised to say something. Would you care to come?"

"I shall be delighted," said Lady Phayre. "Then I can see for myself whether he is like Fenton."

"Oh, I can guarantee that," said Gleam, with a final word of adieu.

She sank back in her chair relieved. Fenton

was an aggressive person, fond of hurling at her his theory of State education of babies as the sovereign panacea for the Weltschmerz. She was a practical woman; and philosophical ideas, unless gracefully conveyed, rather bored her. She could see no sense in their absolute use. A limitless volume of abstraction did not interest her so much as a cubic inch of solid fact. That was why she liked Aloysius Gleam.

She meditated a little longer before the fire, then she switched on the electric light, rang for the curtains to be drawn, and re-read Daniel Goddard's article until it was time to dress for dinner.

It was not a new experience for Lady Phayre. She was familiar with platforms, and the sight of the pale, moving mass of human faces in front. She had listened to the speeches of many demagogues to the proletariat, and had found them singularly lacking in originality. Accordingly, it was with the air of an old campaigner that she settled herself down by the side of Aloysius Gleam, and surveyed the decorous occupants of the platform, and the noisy but enthusiastic audience of working men and women in the body of the hall.

Proceedings had already commenced when they entered. The chairman was concluding his introductory speech. The courteous applause that followed his remarks suddenly grew into the thunder that comes from the heart. Goddard

was standing before the table, his massive dark face lit with pleasure at his welcome. He began to speak. His voice, rich and sonorous, rang out through the last dying cheers, and compelled willing attention. After a few moments he held the audience in his grasp.

Lady Phayre bent forward and looked with interested curiosity at the speaker, whom she saw mostly in profile, at intervals full-face, when he flashed round to the side benches. Her quick perception appreciated the mastery he had obtained over his hearers, their instant responsiveness to his touch. She herself was gradually drawn under the spell, felt herself but a chord of the instrument that responded to every shade of invective, irony, and promise. She was not unconscious of a certain unfamiliar sensuousness in this surrender of her individuality. Perhaps feminine instincts that had long lain dormant were awakened. The sense of power in the man set working deep-hidden springs of sensation. A strain of the barbaric lingers even in so super-refined a product as Lady Phayre. When Goddard had finished speaking, she leaned back in her chair with a kind of sigh.

"That's the genuine article, isn't it?" said Gleam, turning to her smilingly.

She nodded, rested her glance thoughtfully upon him for a moment. He seemed so small, precise, uninspiring compared with the huge-limbed man with the leonine face and rolling voice who had just been swaying her.

"He is a power among these people," she said below her breath.

"I deserve some credit, don't I?" he remarked. He was proud of Goddard, honestly delighted at the impression his pupil had made upon Lady Phayre.

The succeeding speeches, modest and formal, after Goddard's magnetic harangue, were quickly over. After three cheers for Dan Goddard, the audience broke up. The occupants of the platform formed into little groups. Gleam drew Goddard from the largest of these.

"I want to present you to Lady Phayre, the Lady Superior of the League."

And before the other could reply, he had taken him prisoner by the lappel of his coat, and brought him, in his brisk way, to where Lady Phayre was standing, and had gone through the formality of presentation.

"You have had a great success to-night, Mr. Goddard," she said.

"It is easy to speak to an enthusiastic audience," said Goddard. "You see we mean business," he added, addressing Gleam. "We've done our share in agitation. It is for you people in the House now to carry the bill through."

"I'll undertake to see that they don't halt by the way," said Lady Phayre with bewitching authority.

"I wish you were in the House, Goddard," said Gleam.

"Get me a seat and I'll come," he replied with a laugh.

"You'll have the Hough division offered you according to general whisper."

"Not under a miracle," said Goddard. "The moderate element in the constituency is too strong."

"I heard they were going to run an Independent Labour candidate," interposed Lady Phayre. "I know the neighbourhood pretty well. Some friends I often stay with live near Ecclesby, and I hear the local gossip through them."

"They would withdraw the Labour man and support Goddard, if he stood," explained Gleam.

But Goddard laughed deprecatingly and shook his head.

"It is all in the clouds. Repson has not resigned the seat yet. It is only a rumour that he intends doing so, and haste in the matter would be indecent. Anyhow," he added, after a pause, to Lady Phayre, "if you would tell Mr. Gleam any news you may get, you would be doing me a service."

"Why not come and get it first hand?" asked Lady Phayre sweetly. "I should be most pleased to see you if you would call—13 Queen's Court Mansions—Tuesdays."

"You are very kind," said Goddard, bowing. "I had better give you a card," she said, taking one from an elaborate little memoranda-book; "then you won't forget the address."

They remained a while in desultory talk. Then Lady Phayre departed under Gleam's escort, and

Goddard returned to the group that had been waiting for him. An eager discussion, prolonged until the party broke up in the street, swept away from Goddard's mind every lingering impression of his first interview with Lady Phayre.

CHAPTER V

LIZZIE

THE National Progressive League, under whose auspices the meeting at Stepney had been held, had originated in the minds of certain members of the extreme Parliamentary left, the most active of whom were the late Sir Ephraim Phayre, the chief, and Mr. Aloysius Gleam, his henchman. Its primary object was to form a strong wing of the Liberal party, in which extremists, opportunists, and the waverers on the edge of the Independent Labour Party might rally together around practical Collectivist principles. It sought to embrace academic Radicalism and the interests of the Labour Party in a broader scheme of imperial policy.

When Goddard threw himself into the work of the League it had all the promise and vitality of youth. Centres were being rapidly established throughout the kingdom. Systems of lectures on social and political subjects were being organised. Meetings, conferences, and demonstrations were arranged under its auspices. Pamphlets were published from its headquarters in London, as well as a vigorously written journal. Besides thus working on its own account, the League

was gradually gathering influence enough to constitute itself a great agency. It sent speakers to political gatherings, and canvassers to Parliamentary and municipal elections. It gained the confidence of the great trades unions and operatives' associations, and provided helpers in labour conflicts. It was in touch at all points with political life—a vast undertaking, offering an unlimited field for the energies of its supporters. Its Statistical Bureau alone was capable of almost infinite extension.

It was with a thrilling sense of pride that Goddard found himself in the full stream of the new movement. Every day brought him an added sense of power and responsibility. To qualify himself for the tasks that devolved upon him, he read deeply and widely, setting himself resolutely to fill in the gaps of his self-education. He studied French, German, Latin, beginning the latter with *mensa*, like a child, and strove to train his taste and judgment by extending his acquaintance with pure literature. His vigorous intellect assimilated rapidly, both from books and men, and gradually, as the months passed into years, his views became clearer, his judgments more penetrating, and his grasp more sure and far-reaching.

The League work, and afterwards his election to a political club, brought him into frequent contact with Aloysius Gleam. The latter was anxious to keep in touch with Goddard, not only because he foresaw in him a valuable man for the party,

but also because he took a keen personal interest in the young man's career. He had all a shrewd, generous little man's vanity in extending to a big man the patronage he felt would soon not be needed. To his friends he prophesied great things of Goddard. He introduced him to the chief shortly before Sir Ephraim's death.

"It is courageous of you to tackle that powerful-faced young giant," said Sir Ephraim, laughing.

"Yes," replied Gleam, "I feel like a hen hatching an ostrich egg."

And when the young ostrich stalked out of the shell, and in the course of time took up its position in the world as a superior bird, Aloysius Gleam looked on with undisguised satisfaction.

Once, in the early days of Goddard's affluence, Gleam interrupted a warm discussion.

"Why don't you take elocution lessons?"

"I never thought of it," Goddard replied. "I have no desire to become an elegant orator."

"It might be useful to you in your private speech," said Gleam, looking at him in his shrewd way. Goddard frowned perplexedly. Then he understood and coloured slightly.

"I don't want to pretend to be better than I am," he said. "If my speech shows I belong to the people, so much the better. No one will think the worse of me."

Gleam laid his hand kindly on the young democrat's arm—they were walking up and down the lobby of the House—and broke out into an

impetuous harangue. The young man's argument was easily demolished.

The result was that in this, as in many other things, he took Gleam's advice. He was no fool for angry pride to furnish him with cap and bells. He saw, when he came to consider the matter dispassionately, that though London Doric might be sweet in the ears of the proletariat, it grated on the finer susceptibilities of the House of Commons. Whereupon he set to work upon elocution with the tireless energy of a Demosthenes.

So in seven years he had gained for himself an ever-growing reputation. The great reviews had opened their pages to him. The League intrusted him with responsible work. He was on the London County Council, and a seat in Parliament awaited him at no distant future.

To please his wife, Daniel had not settled down in Sunington. He had bidden farewell reluctantly, for it meant the sundering of many ties, and the surrendering of many interests. But Lizzie had been insistent. Visions of domestic harmony, disturbed by incursions of Captain Jenkyns in an advanced state of profanity, had prompted earnest beseeching. Perhaps she was wise; for soon after her marriage the old reprobate, to the exceeding great scandal of the neighbourhood, took to himself a mistress-house-keeper in the shape of a flaunting, red-faced female of pugnacious instincts, who had retained possession of the house after his death. Their

goings on, Emily and Sophie declared, had been something awful.

Lizzie had been well out of it. Daniel would never have been able to hold up his head for the disgrace; whereat Daniel had smiled somewhat sardonically. His skin was a little too tough, he said, for vicarious reprobation.

But Lizzie had other and more private reasons for wishing to migrate. In the first flush of her dignity she had shrunk from the streets with which she had been too grossly familiar during her early girlhood. She had larked with the butcher's boy, played kiss in the ring with the greengrocer's assistant, and kept very serious company with Joe Forster the tobacconist. Such daily reminiscences are apt to prove embarrassing. The translated Lizzie had felt out of her element in Sunington. So, to please her, Daniel had come into London and taken a house in Notting Hill, where they had remained during the seven years of their married life.

It was late when Goddard stood before the familiar door, on his return from the Stepney meeting. An expression of impatience escaped his lips as he noticed a light in the basement; otherwise, with the exception of the faintly illuminated fanlight, the house was in darkness. He let himself in with his latch-key, and walking the length of the dim passage, descended the kitchen stairs, groping his way. He opened the kitchen door softly, and found the housemaid

asleep, with her head on the deal table. Awakened by his presence, the girl started in some confusion.

"Why haven't you gone to bed, Jane?"

His tone was less one of reprimand than that of a man repeating a disagreeable formula.

"Mistress was very poorly to-night, sir, and I thought I had better sit up till you came."

He nodded, looked at her sombrely from beneath his eyebrows.

"Did you see her to bed comfortably?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"Hasn't Miss Jenkyns been here?"

"No, sir. Miss Sophie came for an hour this afternoon."

"Very well," said Goddard, turning on his heel. "Go to bed now, there's a good girl. You must be tired."

He went heavily up the stairs again, turned off the gas in the hall, and continued his ascent. On the first floor he paused, leaned his ear against the bedroom door, and listened. Satisfied with a sound of heavy breathing within, he mounted the next flight and lit the gas in his own study, stirred a blackening fire, and after warming his hands for a few seconds, sat down at his writing-table.

It was a plainly furnished room, lined with books in sober bindings, sloping and falling, with great gaps, untidily, in the shelves. A great table, covered with a red baize cloth and piled with papers, pamphlets, and odd volumes, occupied the centre. An old arm-chair, its seat filled

with a set of blue books, was drawn up near the fire. The mantelpiece was bare, save for a few pipes and smoker's odds and ends. Above was pinned a broad-sheet almanac issued by some Reform organisation. Nowhere appeared any attempt at adornment.

Goddard sat in his round-backed wooden chair, opened a couple of letters that had come by the evening post, and then drummed with his fingers on the table in a preoccupied way. The setting of his face was too stern to express pain, and yet the deep vertical furrow between the brows and the tightly compressed lips indicated thoughts far removed from joyousness. At last he shook himself, brushed his hair from his forehead with a hasty gesture, and drawing a great breath, which ended like a sigh, separated some papers from the chaotic mass, and set to work on them, pen in hand. He worked for half-an-hour, only pausing to fill and light a pipe, and then with a yawn he rose and went through the communicating door into the adjoining room. A camp bedstead and the bare bedroom requisites were all that it contained. His seven years of affluence had brought him no sense of the minor luxuries of life. His personal tastes were as simple as when he lodged in the little top-floor-back in the working folks' street in Sunington.

With his watch he drew from his waistcoat pocket the card he had received at Stepney: "Lady Phayre, 15 Queen's Court Mansions." He had forgotten her existence. He glanced at the

card rather contemptuously, tore it across, and threw it into the grate. Then he undressed and slept the sleep of the weary man.

The next morning he began his breakfast alone, although the table was laid for two. As he ate, he ran through his correspondence, and jotted down notes in his pocket-book. He was a busy man, particularly occupied just now with heavy committee-work on the Council, and sundry organisation schemes connected with the League, and every moment was of value.

Presently the door opened, and Lizzie entered. She did not meet his following glance, but came forward with sullen, downcast eyes, and silently took her place at the table. The seven years had pressed upon her with the weight of fourteen. The devil had walked off with his own beauty. Although she was barely thirty, the plump freshness of youth had gone. The pink cheeks had paled and grown flabby ; round contours had fallen into puffiness ; the pout of the soft lips had relaxed into unlovely looseness of mouth marked by marring lines. A common, slatternly woman, with loose untidy hair and swollen eyelids, and dressed in an old morning wrapper, she was as unlike the rosebud bride of Sunington as the light is unlike the darkness ; and yet by the inexorable law of development she was the same woman.

She poured herself out a cup of tea and broke some dry bread on her plate. Neither had spoken. Goddard's brow darkened a little as he went on

with his breakfast and his papers. She stole from time to time a shifting glance at him. The expression of absorbed interest on his dark face irritated her. The dead silence became unbearable. Suddenly she thrust back her chair a few inches, and struck the table sharply with her fingers.

"For God's sake say something, can't you," she cried half-hysterically.

Goddard looked up gravely and laid down his pencil.

"What can I say to you, Lizzie?"

"Anything. Curse me, nag at me—anything; only don't sit there as if I was the scum of the earth and you God Almighty."

"Well, you have broken your promise once more. What else can I tell you? You can't expect me to be pleased, and I see no good in cursing and nagging. So I hold my tongue."

"I wish I was dead," said Lizzie bitterly.

Goddard shrugged his shoulders. He had done his best according to his lights, and he had failed. Sometimes his heart echoed her wish.

"You have only yourself to thank," he said.

"Have I? I've not got you to thank for anything. Oh dear, no! You know you hate me. You never did care for me. Even when we was first married you cared for your dirty old politics more than you did for me. Oh, why didn't I marry Joe Forster? He has three big shops now, and can hold up his head as much as you can, for all you're a County Councillor and have your

name in the newspapers. And what good does that do to me, I'd like to know? It's all your fault, every bit your fault, and you drive me to it; you know you do, and you'd be glad if I dropped down dead now."

It was not a new story. Her words had no longer power to move him to anger. He accepted her grimly as a burden he had to bear through life.

"We made a mistake in marrying, Lizzie," he said. "We both found it out long ago. I was not the sort of man you wanted, and perhaps I ought to have remained single. But I have done my duty by you honestly, and—so help me, God—I always shall. What is it you want that I do not try to give you?"

Many and many a woman, when she has been asked that question, the helpless question across the league-sundering gulf, has answered, aloud or dumbly, in a great yearning: "Love, a breath of passion, a touch of tenderness." But in Lizzie that craving had never been deeper than the bloom on her cheek, and with the bloom it had perished. There are natures too common for the need of love, which is an instinct upwards of the soul. Instead, she answered querulously: "Why don't you give me some money, and let me live away, somewhere?"

"To do God knows what with yourself? Not I, unless you would like this sort of thing." He took from among the circulars with which he was daily deluged a chance-sent prospectus of a

Home, and put it before her. She glanced at it, and then crumpled it up fiercely, and threw it into the fire.

"If you're going to do that with me, you'd better look sharp, I can tell you," she cried, trembling with sudden rage. "How long have you been making that little plan?"

"It is no plan. You could only go in there of your own free will. My only plan is to shelter you here, and make life as happy for you as you will let me."

Lizzie sniffed contemptuously.

"What did you send for that thing for?"

"It came quite by chance."

"That's a damn lie!"

He bent forward, took her wrist, and looked at her sternly between the eyes, which lowered, abashed.

"You know I never tell lies," he said. "I tell you that you shall never go to such a place unless you wish to. But you shall stay in my house. And listen to me. If this goes on much longer, I shall have to engage a special attendant to live here, who will watch you like a cat. It will be a disgrace for you that you can well spare yourself. So be warned, and turn over a new leaf."

He rose, opened the morning paper, and skimmed through the news summary. Lizzie rubbed the wrist that he had held in an unconsciously tight grip, and then she began to whimper. But her tears had lost their effect upon Daniel. They came with maudlin frequency.

At last she broke into a great spluttering sob.

"I have been miserable ever since little Jacky died. I wish I had died with him."

The name of the child, dead three years before, touched the man's heart. Of the two, perhaps he had felt the loss the more. Standing behind her, he laid a hand upon her shoulder, and said in a rough, tenderer tone—

"It was hard, my girl. But you are not the only one. Other women have been left desolate."

"And other women have wished they were dead. I expect most of 'em do. It's beastly to be a woman."

"Well, you can't help that," he said grimly, resuming his newspaper. "You had better try and make the best of it."

The servant entered with his boots, which she placed on the hearthrug. When he had laced them up he stamped them into ease and looked more cheerful. A man's moral tone always undergoes a subtle change with the donning of the morning boot or the evening slipper.

"I shall be back for supper early this evening," he said, "so you won't be lonely. Now be a good girl. Do."

She made no reply, although he had spoken kindly and forgivingly, and she knew from past experience that the subject of the last night's slip would not be alluded to again. As soon as he had gone, she drew from her dressing-gown pocket a soiled penny novelette, and settled down to her idle morning by the fireside. In

the afternoon Emily came, a weary, shrivelled woman, to remain with her for a few hours. For some time past Daniel had made the sisters a secret allowance, as compensation for loss of time in their dressmaking business, on the condition of their keeping Lizzie company. Society in the ordinary sense she had none. It was the loneliness and idleness that had crushed her. At first it had seemed a grand thing to wear pretty dresses, and keep her hands white, and give over all the work of the house to the servants. Now the habit of sloth was ingrained. She had no occupation, no interests. Even her girlish fondness for finery was gone. The costume that gave her least trouble to put on was the one she selected. Like the once free-swimming sea-anemone she had grown encrusted to her rock, stretching out lazy tentacles. When her cousin arrived she was still attired in the old dressing-gown and down-at-heel slippers she had thrust on as she got out of her bed. Emily, who was precise and businesslike, hurried her off with an indignation not staled by custom, to dress herself decently. During her toilet she made the usual confession to Emily with pleas in mitigation, and the usual indictment of Daniel. But Emily was not sympathetic. She banged in the drawer, where she had been arranging Lizzie's slovenly kept under-linen, and pulled out another viciously.

"You should have married a man like father," she said. "That's the sort of husband you should

have had, who would have pulled you out of bed by your hair and given you a good sound hiding. Daniel's thousands of miles too good for you."

Lizzie turned round and faced her passionately, straining at the ends of her stay-lace.

"I wish sometimes he would beat me. There! I'll make him do it one of these days."

"Dan's not the man to treat his wife like a dog."

"No. He treats me like a tabby-cat—beneath his notice. He has always done it. I may be a silly fool, but it doesn't require much intellec' to know when folks look upon you as the dirt beneath their feet."

"Well, the dirt ought to be grateful when a man like Daniel condescends to put his foot upon it," replied Emily with conviction.

"Why didn't you marry him yourself?" said Lizzie witheringly.

"Elizabeth Goddard, you're no better than a fool," returned Emily. "And if you've nothing pleasanter to say, I'll go back home."

As on many previous occasions, the threat moved Lizzie to tears, then to reproaches, finally to entreaties and submission. When peace was made they went off on a shopping expedition to Kensington High Street, where Lizzie, to make amends, bought her cousin a bonnet, and interested herself in a discussed readjustment of trimming. But outside a news-vendor's Emily pointed with her umbrella to

an item in the contents bill of a Radical evening paper: "Dan Goddard at Stepney—Enthusiastic Reception."

"Oh yes, I see," said Lizzie petulantly. "I suppose you think I ought to fall down and worship him when he comes back."

Her ill-humour returned, and she regretted the bonnet—an additional grievance.

"If it wasn't for him I'm blessed if I'd ever come near you," said Emily in the discussion that followed.

And so it happened that when Goddard came home he found his wife in a fit of sulks. The experiment of a domestic evening failed, as it had done so many times before. She replied monosyllabically to his attempts at conversation, refused point-blank his offer to put her into a cab and drive her to a theatre—a wild delight of past years—and retired to bed at nine o'clock.

Goddard mounted to his own den, and plunged into his work with the zest of a man who has conscientiously acquitted himself of an irksome duty, and is free to apply himself without scruple to more congenial occupations.

CHAPTER VI

THE STARS IN THEIR COURSES

IT was the Tuesday luncheon-hour. The dining-room of the political club was thronged with hungry councillors from Spring Gardens, and politicians to whom the weekly meetings of the Council were a matter of concern. The air buzzed with eager talk. There was a continual going to and fro between the tables—greetings, hand-shakes, hurried conversations between lunchers and passers - by. Elation over an important measure successfully carried through was the prevailing tone, encouraging grandiose imaginings. London was to have its hanging-gardens, like Babylon of old, and the streams that water the New Jerusalem would take a lesson in limpidness from the Thames.

Goddard sat at a table with three others, who were thus forecasting the municipal millennium. He listened with a smile. Had he not just pricked the visionaries with kindly satire in his review article on Extremism ?

“ And all *ad majorem L. C. C. gloriam,* ” said he.
“ That way madness lies.”

There was an impatient laugh.

“ You are a reactionary.”

"I am a practical man," said Goddard. "I don't like confusing means with ends. Matthew Arnold was right in calling faith in machinery our besetting sin. We have beatified too many of our institutions already, and made them too much puffed up with conceit for work-a-day purposes. We are always in danger of drifting into the idea that the work exists for the glorification of the instrument."

"But what about our ideals?" cried one. "They are as necessary for the life of the party of progress, as the reverence for decayed antiquity is for that of the Tories. Man is a dreaming animal, and his dreams inspire his actions."

"Hence this crazy society," said Goddard, with a laugh. "I understand now. But man has reason to direct his inspirations. Have your ideals by all means, but see they are true ones—that they can be attained without the sacrifice of minor commonplace reforms. Best to build up your ideal as you go along."

"Synthetic socialism—a good title," murmured another, a journalist in the labour interest.

"Ezekiel has done it all before you, with his 'line upon line, precept upon precept,'" remarked Goddard. "They did know something down in Judee. But you've begged the question as to the glorification of the County Council. You want to make London flow with milk and honey. Is that your real end? Or is it to pose as a composite middle-class Jehovah? I think the latter. No. I believe in progress. I have given up my life

to the cause of it, and I will fight for it till the last breath in my body. But I will look upon myself and any institution to which I belong as the merest tool in the hands of social evolution."

Here the discussion was interrupted by the waiter, whose temporary ideal was the perfection of his guidance of Goddard in the matter of sweets.

"I will have another helping of beef," said Goddard. "I am hungry."

"That accounts for your paradoxical humour," said the journalist. "I have often noticed it."

Goddard nodded and leant back in his chair. Just then he caught sight of Aloysius Gleam, the pink of neatness, with an orchid in the button-hole of his frock-coat, scanning the room through his eye-glass. When his glance met Goddard he came forward with the expression of a man who has found the object of his search. Pending the arrival of the beef, Goddard rose and advanced to meet him.

"I thought I should find you," said Gleam. "I want to talk to you seriously."

"So do I," said Goddard. "You're the very man I was longing for. Perhaps it's about the same matter."

"Perhaps," said Gleam, with a twinkle of amusement. "You broach it."

"The rumour about Ecclesby."

"What rumour?" asked Gleam, becoming grave.

"The strike. There is a big storm brewing

for the near future, I'm afraid. Haven't you heard?"

"Not a suggestion," returned Gleam.

"I had a report from Willaston—he is the League secretary there—forecasting probable events. Nothing is definite. I thought perhaps you might have heard."

Gleam shook his head.

"What is wrong? New machinery, and Trades Union and Employers' Federation at loggerheads about it?"

"No. Not machinery. Worse than that. Sweating, out-work. Simple tyranny. Here is the letter."

"I don't think much of it. It will blow over," said Gleam, having looked through the letter. "Wait a bit though," he added, with a quick glance. "Ecclesby is in the Hough division, isn't it?"

"Of course," said Goddard. "That's why Willaston wrote to me in particular."

"I'll keep a look-out," said Gleam. "Cleaver and Flyte are the leading firm there. Oddly enough, I am connected with them in a round-about way in the City, through Rosenthal, you know. And then there are Flood & Sons in London."

"What an encyclopaedia you are!" said Goddard.

Aloysius Gleam laughed, and curled his moustache.

"That reminds me of my mission," he said.

"Why haven't you called upon Lady Phayre?"

Goddard disregarded the apparent non sequitur, and replied with an air of surprise—

"What have I to do in ladies' drawing-rooms?"

"Sit, drink tea, and talk political gossip," said Gleam.

"I wasn't brought up to it," replied Goddard. "I have never done it, and therefore it is not to be done. Sound doctrine for a Progressist. Well, Lady Phayre is a little indignant."

"Why? For not taking advantage of a piece of empty politeness?"

"Lady Phayre's politeness is never empty when it is directed towards a member of the party. Her name is not unknown to you?"

Goddard admitted that the fame of Lady Phayre had reached him.

"Well, then," said Gleam, "I advise you, as your oldest political friend, to go and see her. She's a charming woman, attached heart and soul to the party, and can give you help in the most unexpected ways. There never was a successful politician yet who despised the assistance of women."

"Many have got into rare messes through women," said Goddard.

"More have got out of them by their aid," retorted Gleam convincingly.

"But she would be rather astonished if I turned up, wouldn't she?" said Goddard.

Gleam broke into a laugh. There were unlooked for simplicities in Goddard.

"I tell you, my dear man," he said, "that, as Lady Shepherdess of the party, Lady Phayre expects you to go and pay her your homage. Hang it, man! she paid you the compliment of journeying all the way to Stepney to hear you speak."

Goddard's face assumed an air of perplexity, oddly at variance with its usual stern, resolute expression. Then the obstinacy in his nature asserted itself.

"No. It's very kind of Lady Phayre, and I feel flattered. But I'll stick to my own ways. Call me bear, or Goth, or what you like—I have no relish for false positions. You know who I am and all about me, so I don't mind talking frankly to you."

The blood rose to his face as he said this, and he held up his head somewhat defiantly. He had barely as yet divested himself of the uncomfortable impression of masquerading in his well fitting clothes, and of incongruity in refined table adjuncts. If these occasioned a worrying feeling of unfamiliarity, the sense of a wrong element in a lady's drawing-room was still more galling. Gleam was keen enough to perceive these workings of false pride, and he bore Goddard no malice.

"Very well, then," he said with a smile. "Perhaps you are right in your pig-headed way. I mustn't keep you from your lunch. Good-bye. I'll bear Ecclesby in mind."

He shook hands, waved a salute to one of the

men at Goddard's table, and after exchanging a few words with a party near the door, went away. Goddard returned to his beef, which was getting cold, and, after the meal, retired with his three companions to the smoking-room, where an argument arose that banished Lady Phayre from his mind.

He could have resisted Aloysius Gleam's persuasion to the crack of doom; but when the stars in their courses began to take up the matter, he was as helpless as Sisera. If he had marched straight out of the club, he possibly might never have spoken to Lady Phayre again. But the stars turned his steps aside to the Central News tape-machine in the strangers' waiting-room, and there he found himself suddenly face to face with her sitting—a dainty vision—in an arm-chair near the entrance.

Her face brightened as she saw him, and she made a slight forward movement in expectation of his advance. Goddard could do no less than acknowledge these manifestations of friendliness.

"Have you seen Mr. Gleam in the club? They are keeping me such a time waiting."

"I am afraid he's gone," said Goddard, an announcement which the page-boy came up that moment to confirm.

"What a nuisance," said Lady Phayre. "I want a couple of ladies' tickets all in a hurry for the House. I have a country girl staying with me, and have only this evening free."

She looked at Goddard with a little air of concern. Now when Lady Phayre looked at a man like that, she simply rested all her responsibilities upon his shoulders. They became the man's own personal affairs. Goddard was a man like any other. He reflected instinctively.

"I dare say I could get some men in the club to ballot for you—if you don't mind waiting a little longer."

"Would you really try?" she said, her eyes beaming gratitude and apparent astonishment.

"With pleasure," said Goddard.

During his absence she turned over the advertisement pages of a railway time-table, and devised in her mind various club improvements that might conduce to the comfort of lady strangers. When he came back she rose, saw from the look of pleasure on his face that he had been successful.

"I have seen Jervons, the member for Twickenham. He undertakes to get half-a-dozen men to ballot for you; so if they are successful the orders will be round at your house before five o'clock. Will that do?"

"Beautifully," said Lady Phayre: "a thousand thanks."

"I'm afraid it won't be very interesting," said Goddard—"the Army Estimates will be on."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," said Lady Phayre cheerfully: "the child will be pleased, whatever it is. I shall take a novel."

He did not reply, but looked down at her from his superior height, one hand grasping his hat and stick, the other on his hip. There was a tiny pause. So Lady Phayre looked up at him and smiled. There was just the faintest gleam of mockery in her eyes, a transient consciousness of the feminine magic that had made the huge, powerful man do her bidding with the lightness of an Ariel. She put out a delicately gloved hand from her sealskin muff.

"I was saving up a quarrel with you, Mr. Goddard," she said, "for not having been to see me. Surely you could have spared just one half-hour."

There was so much frankness and charm in her tone and in her attitude, as she stood with half-extended hand, and head slightly inclined to one side, that Goddard reddened with a sense of boorishness.

"I am hardly a society man, Lady Phayre," he said lamely, his pride not allowing him to formulate the more conventional apology.

She laughed. She had known men positively intrigue for the right of entrance at her door, and here was one refusing the privilege. He was a curiosity. Her self-pride was pricked.

"You mean my frivolity frightens you," she said. "But I am not as frivolous as I look, I assure you. I can talk even earnestly at times."

"Oh, it isn't you," he began.

"Then it is my friends. Well, some of them

are as unbutterfly-like as bats. But if you don't like a crowd, avoid an 'at home' day, and come any afternoon."

"Do you honestly care whether I come or not?" asked Goddard bluntly.

"Well, considering that I have gone out of my way to ask you twice," she replied, rather staggered, "you might have taken my sincerity for granted."

She raised her chin a little, and put back her hand into her muff. Goddard realised that he had been rude. The desirable aspects of Lady Phayre's friendship also began to dawn upon him.

"Forgive me, Lady Phayre," he said, after an awkward pause. "You see what a bear I am."

The admission brought out again smile and hand.

"Can I come and see you?" he added whimsically.

"Do you honestly want to?" she asked, echoing his tone.

"I should very much like to, indeed," said Goddard.

That evening, Lady Phayre sent down her card, from behind the grating, to Aloysius Gleam. He came up after a while.

"I didn't know you were here," he said.

"Who do you think got me the tickets?"

"I haven't the vaguest idea."

"Mr. Goddard," said Lady Phayre.

"Miss Mabel," said Gleam, turning to the country girl, who was listening to a technical statement by the War Secretary with rapt attention, "Lady Phayre is like Providence: her ways are inscrutable."

CHAPTER VII

A DEMAGOGUE'S IDYLL

GODDARD went away, after paying his first visit to Lady Phayre, with a wondering mind. His original intention had been to make it as short as he possibly could : he had remained nearly a couple of hours. He could scarcely believe his watch.

The delicate play of mind of a pretty and highly cultured woman was a novelty as rare to him as the bubbling of champagne in his apprentice days. He had gone expecting to endure the inane small-talk which his second-hand experience persuaded him was the inevitable adjunct of a lady's tea-table ; he had found conversation upon all the subjects dear to him invested with a charm such as he had never before imagined. Talk on social questions had ever been with him a deeply serious matter. Lady Phayre had brought into it an unknown lightness, a sparkle, a mental keenness, against which his own intellect sharpened itself, and at the same time a bewildering waywardness that never allowed him to forget she was a woman. In short, Lady Phayre was a revelation. He walked along with a buoyant step,

like a man who has made a new discovery that promises to change the old order of things.

After a short interval a pretext arose for repeating the visit. He was careful to magnify its importance for the sake of self-justification. But on the third occasion he owned to himself that he had called out of sheer desire for Lady Phayre's society.

As he stood, hat in hand, in the drawing-room waiting for her, he had a feeling of misgiving curiously like that of a boy who is fearful lest he is taking too great advantage of a kindly neighbour's invitation to visit his fruit garden. Her smile of welcome, however, as she entered, reassured him.

"How good of you to come. I had a bit of a headache, and was beginning to mope by myself."

"I too felt as if it would do me good to have a talk with you," said Goddard, seating himself.

"Surely you don't mope?" said Lady Phayre, lifting her eyebrows.

"O Lord, no!" he exclaimed with a laugh. "I have too much to do."

"I wish I were a man," sighed Lady Phayre.

"I don't," said Goddard. "If you were, I don't think I should have wanted so much to come and see you."

"Well, how am I to do you good? Will tea comfort you?"

"I think it would," replied Goddard, smiling—

"out of your gossamer tea-cups, and with imperceptible films of bread and butter. They seem outside of the uses of the weary, work-a-day world."

"You shall have them, and until they come you shall tell me all the news. I have heard nothing for two days."

He opened his budget. It was somewhat heavy. The lighter trifles of political gossip were beyond his range; but Lady Phayre listened attentively, adroitly brought him to his own part in current affairs. He had just been on a committee of the League, in the north of England, inquiring into the working of the Factory Act for women in certain trades. He had visited many white-lead works, where he had felt daunted by the inevitableness of the sacrifice of human health and happiness.

"But manufacturers are obliged to enforce precautions," said Lady Phayre.

Goddard waved his hand impatiently.

"No precautions will ever prevent it. The poison gets in everywhere. The dust is in the air—impregnates the food, finds its way into the baths, creeps in through the tightest overalls. Women should not be allowed in it—and yet they must work. One feels paralysed before these deadly trades. I saw some women—young and vigorous—who had 'got the lead,' as they call it—death written on their faces, one going to have a child; that is one of the horrible parts of it—to be poisoned before one is born."

"You take it to heart," said Lady Phayre in a low voice. She was touched by his earnestness.

"I suppose I do," replied Goddard. "If a man doesn't, he had better leave Social Reform alone."

Lady Phayre handed him his tea. The strong, heavily veined hand outstretched to receive the cup, conveyed to her a suggestion of strength which she could not help associating with the earnestness of his tone. For a moment Lady Phayre felt, not unpleasantly, the insignificance of her sex.

"Do you know, when I see men like you devoting your whole lives to the cause of others, I feel very small and petty," she said, upon the impulse.

Daniel looked at her in some confusion. No one had ever paid him such a tribute before. Coming from Lady Phayre, it gratified more than a man's vanity. He laughed awkwardly.

"I don't know that I do so much good after all," he said. "You are a far more important person, really. You are in the swim of everything—the pivot of the party."

"Oh, the party!" cried Lady Phayre. "Sometimes I get so tired of it. It seems to be all concerned with means—the end lost sight of. Nothing day after day but little moves, and counter-moves, and intrigues, and this person's speech, and that person's vote. Oh, Mr. Goddard, when you get into Parliament you will never

develop into the typical party-man—the lobbyist, and asker of questions, and mover of amendments. You are so different from most of the other men who come here."

She spoke sincerely for the moment. By the light of Goddard's earnestness she glanced ashamedly at her own political dilettanteism. A momentary conception of nobler effort passed through her mind. Womanlike she projected these higher subjective workings into increased regard for the man. When Goddard took his leave, he was unaware how far he had advanced in Lady Phayre's good favour; but he realised that something new and helpful had come into his own life.

After this he became a constant visitor at Queen's Court Mansions. Usually he chose the times when Lady Phayre was alone. In the general society he now and then met in her drawing-room, he felt shy and constrained, blundered in his speech, and grew hot with anger at imaginary errors. A proud man, he was ashamed at himself for envying the ease of manner of other men. In a mixed assembly he was helpless.

"I am not coming to your omnium gatherums any more," he said once to Lady Phayre. "I don't know how to talk to these people. Their ways are natural to them. I have to put them on, and I put them on crooked."

"But you know how to talk to me," she replied with a smile.

"You are different," he said. "You know who and what I am. You are good enough to take me just as birth and circumstances have made me."

She bent forward and looked him sweetly in the face.

"Be to others just as you are to me."

"That's an utter impossibility!" he exclaimed quickly, with a flash in his eye, at which her face flushed.

"Well, perhaps not quite the same," she said. "But I like you to come occasionally and show yourself at my little receptions. It completes them, you know."

So Goddard withdrew his decision and strove to adapt himself to society ways. But it went sorely against the grain. The hour's discomfort over, he hurried home, threw his dress-coat on a chair, and smoked a pipe in his shirt-sleeves with feelings of intense relief. Other invitations, which Lady Phayre's patronage necessarily procured for him, he refused with obstinate persistence.

"I do far more good, both to myself and others, if I put in a spare evening at a working-man's club," he said to Gleam, who was persuading him to take advantage of social opportunities.

The months went by. Goddard worked with a zest which even he had not known before. In the little comedy of their lives Lady Phayre played Egeria with nice discrimination. Daniel imperceptibly acquired the habit of setting forth

all his schemes and ambitions for her approval. His strenuous life had been so single-purposed that he had retained many simplicities, and his nature came fresh to receive her sympathy. The first time he handed her the manuscript of a review article he blushed like a schoolboy. It was a pleasant time. He was too ingenuous to suspect pitfalls in his path.

His domestic life continued its usual course. Lizzie had spells of soberness and quasi-repentance, alternating with periods of outbreak. These latter, however, were growing more frequent. To Daniel the asperities of everyday existence became more and more external. A dogged, almost Philistine sense of duty kept him uniformly kind and considerate; but he had long since ceased to regard her as one fulfilling any of a wife's functions.

A bond of union between Lady Phayre and himself was formed by the increasing rumours of trade disturbances at Ecclesby, and the consequent complications introduced into the choice of a Parliamentary candidate for the Hough division, in which it was situated. The sitting member was daily expected to accept the Chiltern Hundreds. The Conservatives had secured a strong candidate. The Liberal organisation was divided. The influential local man desired by the moderate section would be opposed by the Labour vote in favour of an Independent candidate. To save a three-cornered contest, the advanced section had approached Goddard. All through the summer,

things had remained at a deadlock. Lady Phayre, with feminine love of intrigue, had stimulated her friends at Ecclesby to exert their influence in Goddard's favour.

"I am going down there in the autumn," she told him one day, "and I shall open the campaign in person."

But before she could fulfil her promise, the trade storm burst in Ecclesby. A general strike and lock-out declared itself. Attempts at compromise failed hopelessly. Terms of agreement, suggested by a board of arbitration, were indignantly rejected by both sides. A long, bitter struggle seemed inevitable. Daniel watched its progress with intense interest. Principles of relation between Labour and Capital were at stake, in whose cause he had fought from those far-off days when he had carried a three-legged stool to Hyde Park on Sunday afternoons, and harangued his casual and apathetic audience. It was a small strike when compared with the great contests that have convulsed industry of late years; but its result would have far-reaching consequences. He thirsted to join in the battle, but the delicacy of his position as regards the constituency kept his tongue silent. And as the days went on, and he saw that the Trades Union was less and less able to hold its own, he chafed in London, and poured out his heart to Lady Phayre.

At last, one memorable day, he found himself in a cab speeding to her, all too slowly. A

great delight was thrilling through his veins. Visions of fierce conflict, victory, fulfilled ambition danced before his eyes. He sprang up the steps of Queen's Court Mansions, tingling with the news he was carrying to his—to his what? He did not know. An impulse, whose sanity he never questioned, brought him hither irresistibly. During the long interview with the strike leaders, from which he had freshly come, his thoughts had turned to her, had identified the anticipation of telling her with the pride of the moment. The gift of feminine sympathy was still so new to him that he rushed to it with a child's indubitative eagerness.

The door of the flat opened as he reached the landing, and Lady Phayre appeared, dressed for walking, in a dark fawn costume trimmed with fur and a toque to match.

"You look pleased," she said, smiling at his dark, flushed face and shining eyes. "Whatever has happened?"

"I am going down to Ecclesby to lead the strike," he said, panting a little. "The Trades Union people have just been to me, and I have come to tell you at once."

The news pleased her, the homage flattered her. She beamed gracious appreciation upon him, invited him to enter and acquaint her with the details. They both remained standing in the drawing-room.

"It's very simple," he said. "The union is badly organised, is gradually losing hold on the

men. No one seems able to take the lead. They are making a mess of it. I was afraid they would. I was only telling you so lately. So they have begged me to come and help them."

"I see," said Lady Phayre, with kindling cheeks, "they want a strong man with a strong will; a leader of men." She put out her hand impulsively. "I am so proud."

The words and the touch of her hand quivered deliciously through Goddard's frame.

"It is the biggest thing I have been called upon to do yet," he said. "Of course I have no official position in the matter; I cannot approach the masters in any way. But the Union has guaranteed free action; placed itself unreservedly in my hands. All the responsibility is practically mine. I shall win," he added, after a pause, during which he took three or four strides backwards and forwards in the room. "Somehow I feel it. I have eternal justice on my side. Oh, to think what success will mean for all these people!"

"And for you, my friend," said Lady Phayre. "Win, and there's Parliament for you with a triumphant majority."

He looked at her for a moment open-mouthed. She saw a new intelligence dawn in his glance.

"Do you mean to tell me you never thought of that?" she asked quickly.

"No," he said simply; "it had not struck me."

Lady Phayre turned her face from him, and buttoned her glove. There are some feelings

which rush into a woman's eyes that it is not advisable to show to the man who evokes them. When she had slipped the last button she looked up at him smilingly.

"I think you're the only man in England who could have said that. When do you commence operations?"

"The day after to-morrow. There will be a big open-air demonstration. Then I'll settle down to regular work—visiting, picketing, speechifying, overhauling the books, agitating for help from cognate trades. I shall have my hands full."

He prepared to take his departure, seeing that she was going out.

"You can walk part of the way with me, if you like," she said graciously.

It was an undreamed-of honour. Save his mother and his wife, he did not remember to have walked in the street with any woman. He strode by her side proud and happy. Their way lay through Hyde Park. The October leaves shimmered like golden scales in the afternoon sun, shedding a glory around him. The few passers-by seemed non-existent. The great stretch of lawn rolled on either side towards the just visible white house-tops. In front, the chequered path of the burnished avenue. From time to time his companion raised her delicate face to him. A slanting beam caught the light of her eyes and the gold tints of her hair under her dainty toque. A strange, unknown feeling stole upon his heart.

A great silence and splendour had fallen over life.

It was Lady Phayre who broke the silence at last. Her voice was sweetly silvery.

"If I came to Ecclesby, could I be of any use to you?"

"You would only have to look as you look now," he answered, "and there is nothing you couldn't help me to do."

"I——"

Lady Phayre began, stopped abruptly as a little tremor shook her shoulders delicately, then recovering herself, broke into a laugh.

"I shall look ever so much more business-like, I assure you. I'll go and make friends with the wives. It will be useful against canvassing time. I am an old campaigner in electioneering, you know. But I have never taken an active part in a strike. It will be a new thing for the political woman to do. I am always seeking after something new. I must have been an Athenian in past ages—an Athenian of the Athenians—and my soul got so impregnated that it has never been able to free itself. I wonder if they would let me make a speech, Mr. Goddard?"

"We will ask the Union," he laughed, following her unwittingly into the lighter track she had started upon. "But will you really come and help?"

"Of course."

"How can I thank you?" said Goddard.

"Post me up in all the ins and outs and technicalities," she replied brightly.

He took up his parable, and told her of shifts and piece-work, and the intricacies of sliding-scales of wages, and the complications of the trade. And, in truth, it was a parable. For the idyllic hour of Goddard's life had come, and air, and trees, and sun, and words all lost their outer sense, and became informed with hidden meaning.

CHAPTER VIII

WITH THE HELP OF LADY PHAYRE

THE outskirts of Ecclesby, where the "quality" live in villas decorously withdrawn from the roadway, and screened from public view by the garden-trees, are as pleasant as those of any idle town given up to homing the Great Retired. The traveller by road might fancy he was entering a Midland Cheltenham or Leamington, so soothingly genteel are its approaches. But a few minutes' walk, past smaller villas, then semi-detached villas, then villas clustered together like reeds in a pan-pipe, then unpretending red-brick jerry-built cottages, would bring on a gradual disillusion, preparing him for the hopeless disenchantment of the town itself. A long black street, untidy with little shops and public-houses standing here and there amid a row of poor, dirty dwelling-houses, mounts in an undecided curve from the railway station, and suddenly, at the top of the hill, twists sharply round into the High Street, where brand-new hotels and brand-new shops try to look smugly unconscious of the world below the corner. But the shops have to supply that world's wants, and all the bravery of window fronts cannot give the illusion of refined and

luxurious patronage. There is not much pleasure to be got out of Ecclesby. Even its theatre is up a dingy side-street, and has a threepenny gallery and sixpenny pit. The fair follies and vain amenities of existence find no place there. It is given over to labour grim, absorbing, inevitable. At certain periods of the day the High Street, Market Square, and Union Street, which cuts laterally through its heart, at the top of the rise, are quite deserted. The great bells ring, and the gaunt countless-windowed factories situated all around in labyrinthine tangle of mean streets disgorge into the main thoroughfare the pale work-grimed population they had swallowed up. The town becomes a swarming hive. The shops are thronged. From the ever-swinging doors of public-houses comes the roar of voices, borne upon gusts of air saturated with alcohol and shag-tobacco. There is little diversity of type or costume. The town exists for one industry. The population drifts from the grim Board School inevitably, unquestioningly into the grim factory. If the next transition is not into the grimmer workhouse by the railway station, they account themselves happy. Each man acts, dresses, eats, hopes, thinks, and, at last, looks like his neighbour. And the girls and women work in the factories too. The streets are alive with them. They march along in knots of three or four, bare-headed, bare-armed, red-shawled, shrill, non-reticent of speech. The doorways of hundreds of dwellings in squalid by-streets are dissonant

with the clamour and picturesque with the dirt-encrusted chubbiness of children.

This is Ecclesby when the factories are working, and the hum of strange machinery strikes the ear on passing by the yawning gateways. But when Goddard went there a blight had fallen on the town. The factories for the most part were silent, the streets depressing with unjoyous idleness. The fact that the strikers had gone in procession the day before with a brass band that played the Dead March in "Saul" before the employers' villas had not produced lasting exhilaration. The very deadly boredom of leisure, apart from anxiety as to issues, was wearing down the adult population. To lean against a street corner, pipe in mouth, hands in pockets, in taciturn converse with one's mates, is pleasant enough for a few hours on Saturday afternoons; but to persist in it all day long, and day after day, induces considerable lassitude of the flesh and infinite weariness of the spirit. What the deputation had told Goddard was true. The men were growing sick of the struggle. Whispers of submission already floated in the air. The Trades Union officials were steadily losing their influence. The employers' agents had been busy among them, spreading nerve-shaking reports as to the impregnable position of the firms. The Union was small, poor, badly organised. The strike pay was scanty. Much of it was spent, almost unwillingly, in drink.

Severe distress already began to make itself felt.

Goddard brought a practised intelligence to grasp the situation, and realised how fully his were victory, if it were gained; also how great a responsibility rested upon his shoulders in urging the continuance of the strike. It meant the extravagant love or execration of a teeming town.

"If you advise us to give in, we'll do so," said the secretary of the Union, a careworn man with iron-grey hair and lantern-face. They had been discussing affairs in the office. The fire had gone out in the tiny grate, and the dimness of a gathering wet evening crept in through the uncleaned panes. Goddard was silent a moment. The man's tone was so hopeless.

Then the joy of battle rose within him, and was mingled strangely with the radiance of Lady Phayre—a thrilling sense of his own strength, trebled by the wine of her influence—and he leapt from his chair and brought his two great hands down on the secretary's timorous shoulders.

"We'll win this, mate. We'll carry it through, and have the firms on their knees. Ruin is staring them in the face. They will have to climb down. Man, we are not fighting machinery. If we were, I would say 'throw it up.' Man has never bested a machine yet, and never will. It's mere brute force—who can hold out

longest. And they can't hold out longer than we. I'll stake my soul upon it."

"But the capital behind them," murmured the secretary.

"That's a pack of damned lies!" cried Goddard. "You can take it from me!"

A glow appeared on the grey face as Goddard's splendid assurance gained upon him.

"We'll follow your lead past starvation, sir," he said in a voice hoarse with new-born hope.

The knowledge of Goddard's arrival had quickened the general apathy. His visible presence in the streets was a draught of strength. The brave words he spoke to casual knots of men turned their sullenness to hope, and were passed from lip to lip after he had gone by. Before the great meeting in the afternoon, he had already lifted the tone of the strikers. They were conscious of a new force among them.

When he mounted the platform in the densely packed market-place, a spontaneous cheer arose to greet him. When he retired, after a long, vigorous speech, he knew that he had accomplished the first and all-important part of his task—the winning of the men's confidence.

And then began a period of intense, unremitting work. For beyond the commonplaces of strike organisation, picketing, fund-distribution, speech-making, and the like, the continuous maintenance of the moral strength of a whole community by sheer force of will involved infinite devotion. He had to carry things with a high

hand. The Employers' Federation invited a conference. For a while he had high hopes. The hour came, and the whole town awaited the issue in breathless suspense. Goddard sat alone in the little office of the Union, chafing at his necessary exclusion from the discussion. At last the representatives of the Union returned, the secretary bearing a paper in his hand.

"Shall we agree?" he asked, giving it to Goddard.

He glanced over it, and his face darkened.

"Can I make this public?"

"Certainly, if you think it best," replied the secretary, with a sigh.

"Thank God, it's over, any way," said one of the representatives.

But Goddard did not hear. He flung open the window and brandished the paper before the crowd assembled in the street.

"Men! listen to the result of the conference."

He read the document in a loud, even voice. The employers had offered a few trivial concessions, a slight rise in skilled wages; but the principles were untouched. He hurried through the last clause; and before there was time for a cry to come from below, he tore the paper across and across with a passionate gesture, and scattered the pieces on the heads of the crowd. The men, who had listened in silent submission to what they thought were the final terms agreed upon, burst into a great cheer. The dramatic touch had quickened the revulsion of feeling.

"There, gentlemen," said Goddard, turning round to the representatives. "I have burned your ships for you."

A day or two afterwards Lady Phayre appeared upon the scene. She was coming on business—not pleasure, she had informed her friends, and accordingly laid house, carriages, and servants under requisition. Mr. Christopher Wentworth, her host, was the leading member of the Progressive League in the neighbourhood, and a humble vassal of Lady Phayre. His wife's interests in life extended from her husband's throat, which was delicate, to his digestive organs, which were dainty.

"So long as you don't take Christopher to open-air meetings, Rhodanthe," she said to Lady Phayre, "and give him bronchitis, or make him late for dinner, you can do exactly what you like."

"Oh, I don't want Christopher. He would be sadly in the way," said Lady Phayre, reassuringly. "I'll make him stay at home and write letters and collect funds."

She summoned Goddard to wait upon her. He had already received two or three daintily penned letters from London, and had been eagerly looking forward to this one from Ecclesby itself.

He found her alone in the bright morning-room, radiant as Romney's Bacchante head of Lady Hamilton that hung on the wall, and wearing the simplest of elegantly-cut blue serge

costumes. Her sunniness almost dazed his eyes, accustomed lately to the gloom of sordid homes and pinched faces. She was eager to hear all the details of the situation ; drew from him an exhaustive report. Her presence lifted him into a sanguine mood, filled him with a vague sweet sense of the triumph of life.

"Now let me tell *you* something," she said when he had finished. "Don't say I am not a woman of character. I have been bursting with it since you came into the room, and I have waited patiently. I have arranged a surprise for you. I am going to institute at once a children's halfpenny tea-house. Haven't you heard anything about it?"

"Not a word."

"I am so glad." She laughed, and clapped her hands. "It has all been going on under your very nose. My own idea. It is the children that suffer so. They don't know why they should bear with hunger. So I am going to give them a great breakfast or tea, with as much bread and butter as they can eat, for a halfpenny."

"But the funds?" asked Goddard.

"That is the greatest stroke of all," replied Lady Phayre enthusiastically. "I have inveigled a grant out of the League, and the *Evening Chronicle* has promised me to start a subscription list to-night. I am negotiating for the use of the Salvation Army Barracks, and Evans and Williams are going to contract for the meals. Haven't I been industrious?"

"You have," said Goddard. "It will be a tremendous help to us."

"You don't mind my having kept it a secret from you?" she asked after some further discussion; "I wanted it to come as a surprise to you—to cheer you with a little unexpected help."

She put her hands in her lap, and bent forward with a pretty air of humility. A faint note of wistfulness in her voice increased its charm.

All Goddard could say was that the scheme had been perfect. He tried to say more, but his unaccustomed brain refused to formulate in words subtleties of emotion. But before leaving he had a sudden inspiration.

"I feel a different man since I have seen you," he said abruptly; "I was inclined to be harassed and despondent. Now—‘Strange how a smile of God can change the world.’ That’s what you seem to be."

Lady Phayre turned away her head and blushed. She knew it was like a school-girl, but she could not help it. No one had ever told her quite that before. The glimpse into spiritual things rather frightened her. She did not know whether to be angry or pleased at being enraptured. Like a wise woman, she decided upon indefiniteness. But she could not hide a certain softness in her eyes as she bade him good-bye.

"I shall be in the Salvation Army Barracks at nine this evening. If you could help me just a little—unless you are too busy?"

He promised, delighted, and went away on house-to-house visits in the dark byways of the town, spreading everywhere, with great voice and hearty gestures, the overflow of his happiness. He felt himself filled with the spirit of victory. One man refused to be comforted.

"Strikes never did no good," he said.

Goddard drew himself up, towered over him, and rated him for pusillanimity. If he could have spoken his inmost heart, he would have shouted—

"Man, don't you see that I am unconquerable!"

And so for the next few days the men were held together and lifted by the one man's happiness.

Meanwhile the Children's Tavern was a great success. Lady Phayre worked indefatigably, serving herself, with other helpers, behind the trestles ranged round the great bare hall and creaking beneath the load of great tea-urns, mountains of bread and butter, and, in the morning, steaming pans of porridge. Goddard loved to make his way through the crowd of clamorous unwashed children to the place where Lady Phayre, deliciously fresh in white bib-apron and turned-back cuffs, was busily dispensing viands, receiving pence and halfpence from grubby little hands, and paying for countless moneyless urchins from a great private store of coppers by her side. And after the press was over, she would emerge from behind the trestles and walk up and down the hall with him discussing affairs.

Never had she seemed so near to him as now when a common interest united them. But in Goddard's fresh, newly-awakened idealism, it was not her arm that brushed his on a common level, but it was her wings that touched his head.

Sometimes he would meet her in the streets, on a round of visits among such homes as she knew; sometimes he would see her sitting in the dog-cart, with her host, on the outskirts of a crowd he was addressing. Once she even persuaded him to accept a dinner invitation at the Wentworths'. She grew more into his life daily.

The strain of his position, as arbiter of the struggle, grew more intense. Rumours of the larger firms being backed up by the great capitalist Rosenthal were gaining hopeless credence. At another fruitless conference, one of the employers boasted that they could maintain a lock-out for a couple of years. Goddard summoned a great mass-meeting of operatives, and gave the manufacturer the lie with passionate vehemence. Once more he imposed his will upon them.

He was fighting this battle as he had never fought before. Every aim of his life seemed to be merged in the issue. Not only were the great principles of the rights of labour at stake, not only the present and future happiness of this great community, but his own career seemed to hang in the balance, and, in a strange, uncomprehended way, his credit with Lady Phayre.

At last the London world began to clamour for Lady Phayre. A rift was threatening to

appear in the Progressive lute. "You only can put things straight," wrote Aloysius Gleam. "Fenton and Hendrick have bumped each other's heads in the dark, and they are angry with one another, and we are all taking sides. You must bring them to kiss and make friends over your dinner-table." So Lady Phayre deliberated. She had one very good reason for remaining at Ecclesby; but, on the other hand, she had fifty little feminine ones for leaving it. The work she had taken in hand, the Children's Tavern, was in capital going order. She had already found her own services, as attendant, superfluous. She was free to resign the charge of it into competent hands. Why should she stay? It was not often that Lady Phayre did not know her own mind. At last she compromised. She would pay a visit to London, to effect the desired reconciliation, and then return to Ecclesby.

"I don't like leaving you at all," she said to Goddard, the evening before her departure. "It seems as if I am deserting you. But I shall make haste back."

"Ah, do!" said Goddard pleadingly. "The people have grown so fond of you. And you are such a help to me."

To atone for her defection, she had dismissed the carriage, and allowed him to see her home after the tea at the Salvation Army Barracks. It was already night, but the moon had risen, and lent a tenderness to things. Lady Phayre was glad of its aid, for it was on her con-

science to leave Goddard with comfortable impressions.

"I have done very little," she replied.

"You have advised me at every turn," said Goddard.

"You have advised yourself while talking to me."

"Anyhow, I could not have got on without you."

"Believe it then, if it pleases you," she said softly. "You can write me a daily account of things, if you like—and I will go on 'advising' you. Will that do?"

"You are too good to me," he said fervently.

They walked on a little in silence. Then she asked him how much longer he thought the strike would last.

"Another fortnight must see the end of the employers' resources," he said with conviction. "The game of bluff can't last longer."

"And are you sure that the Rosenthal story is a myth?"

"As sure as I am that the moon is shining on your face."

Upon the word, the moon disappeared behind a cloud. Lady Phayre started, and touched his sleeve.

"Oh, what a bad omen!"

But Daniel laughed. Omens had no place in his downright philosophy.

"Well, Juliet calls the moon inconstant," said Lady Phayre gaily. "So we won't believe it."

"I only have to keep the men up till then," said Goddard.

"And you will do it, Mr. Goddard," she replied. "It will be a great victory, and we shall all be so proud of you."

So Goddard went to sleep that night with hope thrilling through his dreams. And he woke up the next morning and went about his work, and longed for Lady Phayre. She might be back in five days.

But before the five days were up, Rosenthal's support of the Employers' Association became a matter of public certainty.

"I will not believe it," shouted Goddard to the grey-faced secretary. "Nothing but the sight of Rosenthal's cheque would convince me. If you give in now, you'll be throwing up the most glorious victory labour ever won in this country. You are fools—wretched, cowardly, credulous fools."

But the tide of conviction had set in. He was powerless against it. He strove with the passionate rage of his nature, exhausted himself in wild, furious effort. The end came with overwhelming rapidity. Goddard felt that he had lost his Waterloo.

CHAPTER IX

SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENTS

GODDARD mounted the stairs of Queen's Court Mansions with a heavy tread. He was physically tired, and his heart was sullenly sore. He had felt himself irresistibly drawn hither, though his pride hated the ordeal of confessing his failure to a woman, especially to Lady Phayre. The old, fierce class feeling was ineradicable. She was above him. Success, brilliance alone could keep him on her level. Failure brought him down. A glimmering realisation of this had come to him in the train, and he had pulled up his coat-collar angrily, and doggedly resolved to swallow his humble-pie to the last mouthful. But it did not occur to do otherwise than drive straight to her from the railway station.

He deposited his bag and ulster in the hall, and followed the servant into the drawing-room. The first glimpse of it cheered him. The subdued light, the dancing fire, the warm tones of carpet and curtains, the cosy atmosphere, the charm of perfectly harmonised surroundings, struck gratefully upon his senses.

Lady Phayre dropped on the hearthrug the book she was reading, and rising quickly, made

a step or two to meet him. Her eyes were wide, in great concern.

"Oh, how tired you are looking. Come and sit down, in the big chair by the fire. It was good of you to come. See, I have been waiting for you—with Moumouth."

She smiled, and directed her glance downwards to the white cat which had stalked up and was rubbing itself, with arched back and outstanding fur, against Goddard's legs. He stooped and patted the beast.

"I am just done-up," he said, sitting down wearily in the chair, and throwing back his head.

He was looking exhausted. A pallor appeared beneath his dark skin; his eyes were rather sunken, thus bringing into strange relief his somewhat massively hewn features. A strand of black straight hair fell from the side-parting across his forehead. Lady Phayre, standing with one hand on the back of her chair, regarded him pityingly.

"Have you had anything to eat?"

"Oh, yes; I think so."

"Tell me when. Ah! I see you haven't. I'll order you something in the dining-room."

"I couldn't think——" he began; but she interrupted him.

"You must, to please me. I can't bear to see you so tired. You will feel quite a different man. And a small bottle of champagne."

Man has not been born of a woman who could have refused Lady Phayre, when she spoke with that coaxing charm.

Goddard's face softened into assent, and he followed her with his eyes, in a dumb, wondering way, as she went to give the necessary directions.

He had never quite familiarised himself with his surroundings in that room. It always seemed a corner of Paradise that had somehow got left behind upon the unlovely earth. The feeling had never been so strong as at present. With his brain throbbing from the painful emotions of the day, his eyes still dazed by the various scenes—the mean, squalid streets, the grim, closed factories, the poverty-stricken homes, the idle, sullen men lounging at street-corners, the crowd of gaunt, unresponsive faces at the meeting—and with his body exhausted with fatigue and hunger, this warm nest of exquisite peace and comfort was deliciously unreal. Even Moumouth, luxuriously coiled on his velvet cushion, seemed a creature of a different sphere from that of the lean grey cats he had seen darting from doorways across alleys, preceding the appearance of red-shawled women. And the voice of Lady Phayre hummed like far-away music in his ears, and her delicate womanly sympathy was like soft hands against his cheek. It was almost a dream. He leaned forward, elbows on knees, his fingers through his hair. He longed for her to come back, so that he could tell her of the failure. Somehow, it no longer struck him as an ordeal. The magic of her presence had charmed away his repugnance.

She returned, knelt down on the long fender-stool, and spread out her hands before the blaze.

"They won't be long."

She turned her head sideways towards him as she spoke. Her attitude was alive with feminine grace and charm.

"You are as good as you are beautiful," he said, in reply to her hospitable remark.

She met his full glance, and smiled contentedly. The blunt sincerity of the tribute compensated for its lack of the finer imaginative shades. There was a moment's silence. Then she raised her eyes again, but this time with sad expectancy.

"Well?"

He broke out in a kind of groan.

"It's all over. I needn't tell you that. You got my letter this morning, and you must have guessed from my wire this afternoon. We give in to-morrow unconditionally — after all these weeks of struggle and sacrifice. It is the most crushing blow labour has ever had. And I'll stake my existence another week would have seen them through. Rosenthal is no more going to finance these firms than he is going to finance me. It has been cruel. I have been working at it since six o'clock this morning. It has been like trying to fly a kite with a cannon-ball at its tail. At the meeting this afternoon I did all I knew. I have never lost my head with passion before. They were all like dead men; went away dragging their boots. Some of them

cursed me. Managers came round me afterwards. ‘ Didn’t I know? The strike fund was exhausted.’ As if I was ignorant of it! ‘ Two more days would see the end of it.’ I said, ‘ In God’s name, see the two days out.’ They shook their heads; were going to announce surrender then and there; but I managed to make them put it off till the morning. And then I came away—eating my heart out.”

He set his teeth and glowered at the fire. The story of the defeat had brought back the bitterness in all its intensity. Lady Phayre did not speak, instinctively knowing that, with him, silence was the truest sympathy.

“ The bitter part to me,” he continued, with note of passion that vibrated through the woman, “ is, that if I could have had a hundredth part of the grip on them to-day that I had a week ago, I should have brought them through. I know it as I know water goes down hill. I have failed. It is my failure. I have been responsible for all these poor creatures’ sacrifices during the past weeks; and now all the poverty, hunger, despair, for nothing. You saw what it was a few days ago. You should have been there this morning. I saw a man seize a bit of bread and treacle out of a child’s hand and begin to devour it—like a wolf—I couldn’t stand it.”

Lady Phayre looked at him quickly, and then for the first time noticed a slight bruise and an abrasion on his forehead. She drew her own conclusions.

"Oh, the awful misery of it all," said Goddard between his teeth.

"I am sorry," said Lady Phayre in a low voice, "sorry to my inmost heart; but I am sorrier for you."

"Ah! you mustn't say that," cried Goddard passionately. "Think—you couldn't mean it. It would be inhuman!"

"It is only too human," murmured Lady Phayre.

He was about to speak, when the maid-servant announced that the supper was ready; so, instead of replying to Lady Phayre's murmur, he remained silently wondering.

She led the way into the dining-room, where a dainty but substantial meal was spread—a piece of salmon with crisp salad, a truffled pie, a cold fruit-tart. Only one place was laid. It had seemed to Lady Phayre she could give him kinder welcome if she sat by him as he ate than if she went through the formal pretence of joining him at the meal. Then she wondered, in the feminine way, whether he was cognisant of it. The servant uncorked the champagne and retired. Lady Phayre sat down near him, resting her elbow on the table. At first he leaned back in his chair, looked at his plate, then at her.

"I feel too sick at heart to eat. The thought of those poor starving women and children!"

"Your going without food will not fill their mouths, you know," said Lady Phayre in sympathetic remonstrance.

"I suppose I feel my own personal humiliation too," he said ungraciously, as if forcing out the admission. "One may as well be honest. It's the biggest thing I've set my hand to as yet, with everything depending upon it. And to have to throw it up when victory was staring one in the face! It is maddening!"

He bent forward impatiently and took up his fork. He laid it on his plate, and turned to Lady Phayre.

"You are the only person in the world I could say that to."

"Do you know why?"

The words were half whispered, but she looked at him full and clearly.

"Because you are yourself, I suppose—your good opinion dear to me, your sympathy a necessity."

"And all that because you know I believe in you."

Her eyes fell beneath his gaze, which was stern and yet half pleading. Then she raised them again slowly, with the delicious upward sweep of her lashes, and repeated—

"I believe in you."

A thrill ran through the man; his dark, powerful face lit up. Lady Phayre shifted her attitude, and broke into a silvery laugh.

"And all this time you are not eating. If you don't begin at once I shall go away."

Goddard laughed shamefacedly, with a vague consciousness that he had been ungracious in

not having commenced before. He helped himself to the salmon. After the first mouthful or two his aversion to food disappeared, and he went on eating with the appetite of a big-framed, very hungry man. With the exception of a sandwich and a glass of beer at the station bar before starting, he had eaten nothing since his early breakfast. The food and the wine restored his physical well-being. Lady Phayre looked on, pleased, she could scarcely tell why. These big, earnest men were sometimes like babies—so helpless, if left to themselves. She tended on him now and then in a pretty way without leaving her seat, passed his plate, handed him the little silver jug of cream, and, when the meal was over, fetched from a cupboard a box of cigarettes. Like a man unaccustomed to delicate feminine ministrations, Goddard accepted them rather tongue-tied, with a certain tremulous bashfulness. The little hospitable actions, so homely and therefore charming to a man of gentler nurture, were to him full of a rare exotic sweetness. All through the meal she exerted herself to talk to him brightly of little things, incidents that had brought them into pleasant contact during the late struggle. He finished his cigarette, and they returned to the drawing-room.

Goddard stood before the fire, with his hands in his jacket pockets. The sense of personal humiliation still smouldered within him, but the raging of the flame had been subdued. He

felt that he could hold up his head again. And it was the loyal tender sympathy of that woman in the low arm-chair before him who had brought it about. He had never known before how a woman could be a necessity in a man's life. Till then he even had not realised how imperious were the cravings for her, in spite of the revolt of his galled pride, during that weary journey back to town. She looked so fair and exquisite. His eyes met hers. But something more than her beauty stirred the eternal masculine within him, and when he spoke his voice vibrated.

"Will you always treat me like this, Lady Phayre?"

She smiled.

"Is it much to do for you?

"It is growing to mean everything in the world to me. I have lived a rough life away from women—ladies—women like you. Hitherto it has never occurred to me that I was not self-sufficing—that I could ever look to a woman for help. A year ago I should have laughed at it—thought it a sickly fancy of the hyper-sensitive semi-men in novels. But I have needed you this day, and I came to you because something stronger than I impelled me. And you have given me new life to-night. Do you know that?"

"You were looking so worn out and sad when you came in, that it pained me," said Lady Phayre, non-committally.

But Goddard's ear detected a soft note in her voice. He came near to her, sat down on the fender-stool, almost by her knees.

"Why are all women not like you? What a great beautiful world it would be."

"Any woman would have done the same; given you of her best to cheer you. Besides, I was grieved — you have worked so nobly. Everybody has been talking about you — of nothing else. I felt so proud I had been working with you in my poor way — and I had set my heart upon your winning."

"And I have failed miserably," said Goddard. "Therefore you ought to feel I was unworthy of your trust."

"You don't mean that. It hurts me," she cried quickly, really wounded.

Goddard's heart came into his eyes. The goddess had come down from the far-off pedestal where he had worshipped her, and was by his side, throbbing woman. He had a strange intoxicating sense of her nearness. He raised his hand and touched the edges of the feather fire-screen she was holding in her lap.

"Forgive me," he said. "It is hard to believe that my success or my failure is of concern to you."

"Why is it hard?" she asked in a low voice, looking down.

"Because it means more than my wildest dreams could ever bid me hope," he replied, with a sudden rush of passion.

There was a long silence. Lady Phayre could find no words to answer, conscious that her muteness was an expectation of fuller avowal.

But Goddard's brain was whirling with wonder and strange joy. His hand sunk a hair's-breadth, and touched her knee. The contact was electric to him. He drew his hand away quickly, and, rising to his feet, stretched himself, as if he had awokened out of a dream. He could scarcely realise what had happened. His enthusiastic practical life had not been fertile in psychological moments. Lady Phayre looked up at him with angelic sweetness. Generally more graceful than seductive, she was bewilderingly woman at this moment. Suddenly, with an instinct of self-preservation, she rose too, and laughed.

"I told you I believed in you, you know. Our little faiths are of moment to us."

Her light tone saved the situation. Talk was resumed, but it did not flow so spontaneously as before. At last Goddard rose to leave. She was solicitous as to his rest. Had he any more work to-night?

"I am going straight home," he answered, with a laugh.

He held her hand for a long time and looked her in the eyes.

"You will sleep happier than if you had not come to me?" she asked.

"Ah! God bless you," he said, rather huskily.

And then he squeezed her hand, and went hurriedly from the room.

CHAPTER X

LADY PHAYRE THROWS HER CAP OVER THE WINDMILLS.

IT had been a quick rough grasp, bringing to Lady Phayre a new conception of handshakes. It had not been violent like that of certain perfervid ones among her friends, forcing the rings into her delicate flesh ; but her hand tingled, and the tingling mounted her arm and died away in a flutter in her bosom. Involuntarily she held up the hand in front of her, saw that it trembled a little, and then laid it against her cheek. A swift consciousness of the act brought a flush to her face. But instead of drawing away her hand, she moved it slightly so that her lips touched the palm, and there it stayed while she gave herself up to a day-dream. And the smile rose into her eyes which no one has ever seen in a woman's, except when she has been taken unawares ; which only comes when she is alone, and is looking half tremulously, half amusedly into her heart.

Gradually, however, the smile grew dim with a gathering moisture. She was not a woman to whom tears came readily. She was surprised and glad. They were a delicate test of the sincerity of her emotion. A drop hung on the

lower lid for a moment and fell upon the back of her fingers, losing itself among the rings. Her heart melted over Goddard. Failure for him was different from failure for other men. The wherefore of this conclusion she did not argue out, content with the assurance of its truth in her own mind. The great battle, into whose side-issues she herself had been drawn, was lost. She was sorry. But she had spoken truly when she had said she was sorrier for him. The fallen cause was merged in the defeated man. Her thoughts drifted towards plans of consolation.

It was very still, silence only broken by the whirr of the little leaping flame jets in the fire. The white cat rose from the hearthrug, stretched himself, stole noiselessly over the pile carpet to the centre of the room, and then, after a dubious wag of the tail, returned to slumber. Lady Phayre did not change her attitude. Her occupation engrossed her. She was compounding balm for Goddard—a new and wondrous panacea, whose secret she had just discovered—an extract of many feminine simples as old as the leaves on the Tree of Knowledge.

The sudden opening of the door caused her to start with a foolish hope that it might be Goddard returning. But the neat maid-servant, in her subdued voice, announced Mr. Gleam.

He came forward eagerly, his dry equable face glowing with excitement.

“Have you seen Goddard?”

He was too preoccupied with his business even to linger his usual moment over her finger-tips.

"He has been here. Why do you want him?"

The question was in a breath with the reply. Something had happened. She caught Gleam's excitement, half rose in her chair, and looked up at him anxiously.

"To tell him some news. Great news. Glorious news. I am the only one who has got it. The enemy have been weakening all the time—a rift within their lute. Rosenthal has backed out. Cleaver & Flyte are in a panic—Rosenthal was behind them, you know. The others can't stand alone. It's utter rout!"

"But it's too late!" exclaimed Lady Phayre, with a ring of dismay in her voice. "Haven't you heard?"

"It isn't. Not yet," replied Gleam animatedly. "The managers won't declare till to-morrow morning—unless they are fools. But I have more precise news still. You did not let me finish," he laughed apologetically. "They will give in all along the line if the men hold out another four-and-twenty hours."

"They must hold out," cried Lady Phayre. "Oh, why isn't Goddard there?"

"Better he should be here—if I could only get at him. Wiring couldn't have been definite enough. It's not safe. Let me track him down, and off he goes by the midnight train, or the newspaper train, and then——"

"He will win," cried Lady Phayre exultantly.

"Of course. Come, see, conquer. As easy as lying. That is why I have killed three cab horses under me to find him. I was in despair. I knew he had left Ecclesby. At his house they assured me he was not in London—did not expect him for a couple of days. No news at the clubs—his offices. Then I came here. Thank Heaven, he is in London, at any rate. If I can't find him, some one else will have to go down."

"And Goddard lose his triumph after all? He must be found. Besides, they would not believe any one else."

"I was thinking of going myself, *en dernier ressort*," said Gleam rather quizzically, "just as I am. I think they would believe me."

"So would the masters. A member of Parliament in dress clothes going about at six o'clock in the morning! Besides, you would catch your death of cold."

She laughed playfully, but she was trembling all through with suppressed joy. The knuckles of her hand, that held a futile ball of a handkerchief, were white. There was a little pause. She looked on the ground for a moment, then she lifted her long lashes, and regarded him half-shyly, with a smile playing round her lips.

"What would you say if I told you where you can find him?"

"Anything," cried Gleam. "Where is he?"

"At the Midland Grand Hotel."

She told the lie with astounding charm. He

whipped up his hat from the table and turned towards her.

"Why did I not come to you at once? You are not a woman, but an Immortal. A crisis—a time of difficulty—and you come out of a rosy cloud like an Homeric goddess."

Lady Phayre smiled on him divinely. She held out her hand.

"I won't keep you. I am as eager as you are."

In another minute she heard the wheels of his departing cab in the street below. She broke into a little ringing laugh: he had gone so promptly and unquestioningly on his fool's errand. A woman in an exalted condition of mind has a queer sense of humour.

A wild fancy had seized her. It had grown into an irrepressible desire. Her woman's wit had worked swiftly. The lie had mounted to her lips on wings of triumph, and spread radiance over her face. No wonder Gleam was enraptured.

Women who are in the habit of throwing their caps over windmills find it as monotonous as anything else after a time; but for one who has never done it before, the act is accompanied with a rare exhilaration.

Lady Phayre had lived a bright but perfectly exemplary life. No breath of scandal had ever rested upon her name. Sir Ephraim had cloyed her with affection, and hitherto she had regarded amatory offerings with a young confectioner's serene indifference to puffs. If she dared now and then to flout at convention, she was only

exercising the privileges of her position. No one could find a word to say against it. To have driven to a politician's house at night to deliver a political message was a commonplace of propriety. But to take the message of victory to the man she loved, knowing, with a thrill that quivered from her feet to her hair, that the message would contain also the openly avowed gift of herself—that set matters on a totally different plane. It was wild, daring, unutterably sweet. The breathless moment that followed the lie was the supreme point of happiness in Lady Phayre's life.

She went to a writing-table, took a sheet of the crested, delicately-scented paper, and wrote a hurried line, which she enclosed in an envelope and thrust in her corsage. Then she rang for her maid, and in a few moments was speeding across London in a hansom cab. The cold air caught her face, filling her with a joyous sense of vitality. She pictured, glowingly, the little scene that would take place. First, his look of wondering delight at her presence, then the illumination on his face when she gave him her breathless message. There would be just time to deliver it, if he was to catch the midnight train. The letter she would slip into the letter-box. It would be found after she had left. If it was forwarded to him the next day, so much the better.

She loved him. It was a new, wild sensation to her. The gradual drifting towards the rapids had been pleasant, though not unaccompanied by certain trepidations and misgivings. This even-

ing had brought her to the edge, and the swirl fascinated her. For once Lady Phayre had lost her head. And yet there was method in her wildness. She felt herself worshipped, longed for, saw the man standing in passionate helplessness on the other side of the social gap between them. It was her prerogative to stretch the bridge across. In the midst of all the excitement, Lady Phayre was deliciously conscious that she was doing it gracefully.

Her mind was blissfully unheedful of the route. Crowded thoroughfares, dreary squares, long, gaunt streets—it was all the same to her. She lay back in a corner of the cab, felt the letter stiff against her bosom, beneath her seal-skin jacket, and surrendered herself to her sensations. They were those of an angel of mercy committing a rapturous indiscretion.

At last the cab stopped at the given number of the quiet street where Goddard lived. Bidding the cabman wait, she ran up the steps and rang the bell. For a moment she hesitated with the letter in her hand, fingering it nervously. Then, with a little throb, half-joy, half-fear, she thrust it into the letter-box.

A servant came to the door and stared at the visitor. Lady Phayre's heart beat so fast that she could scarcely speak.

"Mr. Goddard's upstairs, ma'am. I'll fetch him," said the servant; and she ran up the stairs, leaving Lady Phayre standing in the hall.

She was a slatternly slip of a girl, in a print

dress. The thought of men's incapacity in the domestic economies brought a superior smile to Lady Phayre's lips. She forgave him, on account of his sex, for being left to wait in a draughty passage. But the dining-room door was ajar, showing a light within. There was no reason against her entering, her hand was upon it, when it was suddenly opened wide, and, in the full light appeared the figure of a woman with sodden features, dull eyes, and loose, untidy hair, dressed in a dirty flannel dressing-gown.

For a second they stood watching one another. Then the woman made a step, and reeled sideways against the wall. She was drunk.

"Who the — — are you?" she cried in a thick voice.

Lady Phayre was transfixed with horror. She shrank back, just as Goddard rushed down the stairs. He had heard his wife's speech. It was an awful moment. At the sight of him the woman cowered.

"Stay in that room!" he thundered at her; then he slammed the door, and still gripping the knob, stood with livid features and heavily coming breath, staring into Lady Phayre's white face.

"You here? What madness brought you?" he said hoarsely.

The sound of his voice addressing her was an awakening shock to Lady Phayre.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, the disgust and revolt of her soul finding its only expression in an

inarticulate cry. And then she instinctively fled towards the street door.

But Goddard overtook her in two or three great strides. She shrank into the corner, put up her hand as if he were about to touch her.

"Let me go. Don't come near me. Don't speak to me. It is horrible."

"Yes, it's horrible," he replied fiercely. "But it is my curse, and not my fault, that I have a wife like that."

"Your wife, your wife?" she said in a queer, faint voice. "That—that woman your wife?"

"You did not think it was my mistress?" he exclaimed with bitter coarseness. "To come to *her* after leaving you!"

She recovered her composure with a strong effort.

"I will trouble you to open that door for me."

He slid back the latch, held the door open for her to pass out, followed her, and, shutting it behind him, stood with her on the steps. Then, before she had time to descend, he seized her by the wrist.

"What madness made you come to this house? Tell me."

Her first impulse was to wrench herself free and rush down to the waiting cab, so as to fly from the loathed spot, and be alone with her sickening mortification. But he held her too firmly.

"Tell me," he said again sternly. "You would not come here without some good reason."

"Let go my arm. You are hurting me."

"Forgive me," he said, in a softer tone, dropping her wrist. "The hell of indoors followed me out here."

Lady Phayre at that moment hated him intensely. If it had been a mere personal service to him, rather than perform it she would have called to her safe-conduct into the cab the policeman who was pacing the solitary, wind-swept street. But she reflected on the gravity of the issue. Mastering her repugnance, she told him in a few curt sentences the object of her mission. The longing for escape tingled through every fibre in her body. As soon as the last word of the hated task was spoken, she shuddered, flew down the steps, and rushed into the cab.

At the door of Queen's Court Mansions, after she had paid her fare, her heart stood still with a sickening recollection. She had left the letter behind in the box. For a moment she thought of driving back to claim it; but that was impossible. She crawled up the stairs and went to bed, her brain reeling with rage, disgust, and humiliation.

Goddard stood bareheaded on the steps till the cab had disappeared in the darkness, and then let himself in with his latch-key. He went into the dining-room. Lizzie, lying half asleep on the couch by the fire, turned her glazed eyes towards him as he entered. Her hair was squalidly loose, her face bloated, her figure shapeless, her dirty dressing-gown half open, her stockings wrinkling

around her ankles. The room smelt of spirits; the furniture was awry; the table-cloth was askew, and on it were crumbs of a half-eaten Bath bun, a dirty handkerchief, and a copy of a penny novelette, lying open at a great stain of grease.

A wave of indescribable loathing passed through the man. A savage desire leaped from his heart to snatch the sofa-cushion from under her and stifle her with it as she lay there, but it ended in a great lump in his throat.

"I told you to go to bed," he said fiercely.
"Go at once."

She rose to her feet and staggered, unable to walk. If she had fallen to the ground, Goddard felt that he could not have touched her. She dropped back on the couch. He rang the bell and the girl appeared.

"Call cook and put your mistress to bed at once. I am going back to Ecclesby to-night. I don't know how long I shall be away. I shall wire to Mrs. Smith to come here to-morrow."

The girl went out to fetch the cook. Lizzie looked at him with stupid gravity.

"Think I believe you're a-going to Ecclesby? You're going to that Piccadilly Circus woman."

Goddard sprang forward, caught her by the loose collar of her dressing gown, and shook her till the stuff tore.

"Do you want me to kill you?" he said, between his teeth, glaring at her.

She was frightened, and began to whimper.

Goddard stood for a moment looking at her. Then he passed his hand through his hair in a passionate gesture.

"O God!" he cried, in a low, trembling voice, and then strode out of the room.

He sought mechanically his still unpacked bag, his overcoat and necessaries, and went out into the night. At St. Pancras Station he found Gleam waiting on the platform. He was conscious of the Member asking him for certain explanations concerning the Midland Grand Hotel and Lady Phayre, and of listening to details of the leakage of secrets, Rosenthal's defection, to congratulations, encouragement, adieux as the train moved off, but it was all a phantasmagoria in which his intellect worked independently of himself. The glorious news he was carrying, the certain victory that was to crown his hopes and ambitions, the thousands of lives whose destiny he was bearing in his hands—all loomed like vague shadows at the back of his consciousness. But his brain was on fire with passionate love for Lady Phayre, and wild hatred of the woman from whom he had just parted. If man ever carried the fires of hell in his heart it was Goddard, that night, as he was on his way to realise the first great ambition of his life.

CHAPTER XI

RECONSTRUCTION

THE victory was complete. The sudden collapse of the firms caused a sensation all over the country. The newspapers were ringing with his name. He was the hero of the hour. At Ecclesby he was the hero for all time. His first appearance after the announcement of the terms of settlement was a signal for extravagant demonstration. Men shouted themselves hoarse, and fought to shake hands with him. Women wept upon each other's necks and shrilled out blessings. One, mad with joy, threw her arms around him and kissed him. A torch-light procession, headed by two frenzied bands, playing "See the Conquering Hero comes," carried him in triumph through the streets.

For the time his heart glowed with the intoxication of success and popular worship. But when the shouts of the crowd had ceased ringing in his ears, the glow faded like a false glamour, and left him face to face with grim realities, before which all else seemed shadowy. As soon as he reached London, he went with whirling thoughts to Queen's Court Mansions. What he should say to Lady Phayre he did not

know. All that he had defined was a fierce hunger to see her again, a wild longing to throw himself at her feet. The dormant passion of the man had awakened and shook him to the depths of his nature. His love for her had flowed so calmly, had quickened so imperceptibly, had maintained so smooth a surface with passionate depths so unsuspected, that when the sudden chasm met its course, it dashed down an overwhelming cataract that swept him headlong into unknown abysses. The blood swirled through his veins as he stood waiting outside the familiar door. The servant opened it. Lady Phayre was unwell, was not receiving any visitors.

"Is she in bed?" asked Daniel rudely.

"She is keeping her room, sir."

"Tell her that I wish to see her."

The servant retired, and returned with the message that Lady Phayre could not possibly receive, and would not be well enough to do so for some time. He had to depart, raging with disappointment. He went home, shut himself up in his room, and wrote to her. The days passed, and he received no reply. A second letter met with similar treatment. Then he called again. This time neither the electric bell, nor the little brass knocker, caused the door to be opened. At the entrance to the Mansions he met the porter, who told him that Lady Phayre had locked up her flat for six months, and had gone to the south of France.

Then, and then only, did Goddard realise his

lost paradise. He had been buoyed up with hopes that if he could but have speech with her he could win his pardon, his right of entry into the bit-over of Eden that she inhabited. Now she had closed the gates. If the porter had been the angel of the flaming sword, Goddard could not have looked at him with more hopeless acquiescence.

He wandered for some time aimlessly through the streets. Life seemed as drear as the murky November afternoon that was merging into a wet, dismal night. He had finished his routine duties for the day, had hurried through them feverishly in view of his visit to Lady Phayre. He walked on to Piccadilly Circus. There he stopped, debated for a moment what he should do. A Bayswater 'bus had just drawn up at the end of the lumbering line, and the conductor was vociferating loudly. He shouted into Goddard's face—

"Now, then! Nottin' 'Ill, sir. Room inside."

Goddard turned away quickly. He could not go home. The thought of Lizzie, foul and drunken, caused a red cloud to pass before his eyes. In his present mood it would be well not to see her.

He made his way to his club, mounted to the quiet library, where he would be undisturbed by the chatter of acquaintances, and pulling up an arm-chair before a fire-place in a dark corner, gave himself up to the grim task of reconstructing his life. A new devastating element had

come into his sphere—Lizzie. In the days before his friendship with Lady Phayre his wife had counted for little in his earnest life. He regretted her unhappiness, did what lay in his power to remedy the irremediable mistake of his marriage; but never desiring freedom, the bond scarcely troubled him. Even during the sweetness of his intercourse with Lady Phayre it had galled him but little. She was so far above him, the feelings with which he regarded her were so new to his almost original experience that he had not realised that he loved her after the common way of men. In the serenity of Lady Phayre's atmosphere Lizzie counted for no more than the little bare top-room in which he had once lived, his early memories of hardship and struggle with poverty. But now when the idyll was over, when he felt the man's fierce passion for the woman that was lost to him, the other woman who stood between counted as a terrible, resistless force.

He gazed with set features into the fire. It faded, and in its place rose the scene of that night when the two women had met. One face noble, intellectual, pure in outline; the other, sodden, coarse, and bestial. He gripped the arms of his chair, and a half groan came from his lips. A loathing of the woman to whom he was bound arose within him like a nausea.

Then anger shook him—anger at the folly of his marriage; anger at the coarse nature of his wife, at her father's drunkenness, at the pretty

baby face that had caught his raw fancy—anger, too, at Lady Phayre. Why had she sought him out? Why had she lured him on to enslave himself to her? Anger at her scorn of him, at her fine-lady sensitiveness that was revolted at the sight of a drunken shrew. Anger at her having led him into the fool's paradise only to eject him ignominiously.

A slight tap on his shoulder aroused him. He started round: the anger that was hot within him turned against the disturber. It was Gleam.

"I have been looking round the club for some one to dine with. Come along," he said in his friendly way.

But Goddard glowered at him. At that moment Gleam seemed to belong to the other side of the great gulf, and he hated him with the old class-hatred. He looked so spick and span with his evening dress, and gold eye-glass, and meticulously trimmed head. His manner was so easy, giving the impression of freedom from sordid cares. He had no foul drunken wife dragging him down. He could meet Lady Phayre on a level. He could offer her marriage, and she could but take the offer as a compliment. A sense of personal degradation filled Goddard's soul, and he hated himself for hating Gleam. In a moment, however, he came to his senses, but not before Gleam had rallied him on his confusion.

"Caught you napping, eh? Well—will you dine?"

"No," said Goddard, rising from his chair.
"Not to-night. I ought to have got out of this half-an-hour ago."

He made a pretence of stretching himself as if he had been asleep. Gleam looked at him with his quick glance.

"You have been overworking yourself. Take care. You great strong men break with a crash. Go away and have a rest."

"Like Lady Phayre," said Goddard, in the bitterness of his heart.

"Quite so. That confounded strike of yours did for her. What the dickens we're to do without her I don't know."

"Life will go on just the same, I suppose. No one is indispensable."

He laughed mirthlessly. A faint flush rose in Gleam's dry cheeks.

"You're talking treason, Goddard. You certainly do want a rest."

"One wants a devil of a lot of things one can't get," said Goddard.

"I want my dinner, and I'm going to get it," replied Gleam good-humouredly. "Good-bye."

He went out of the library, took his place in the lift. His eyes twinkled, and he smoothed his moustache abstractedly. Then a little exclamation broke from him.

"I wonder!" said he.

"Did you speak, sir?" said the lift-porter.

"Eh?" replied Gleam. "Yes; I wonder—I

wonder why I have come down to the basement when I wanted the dining-room floor."

But Goddard could not sit any longer in the library. The brooding spell was over, and its place was taken by feverish unrest. He left the Club, went out into the streets, and began to walk rapidly. Whither was he going? He did not care. A vague idea that he could free himself of his madness by physical exercise prompted him. He had a faint recollection of a scene in a penny dreadful read in his board-school days—a scene where the hero, to bring calmness to his throbbing brain, mounted his horse and galloped at whirlwind speed over miles and miles of moorland, in frenzied chase, until the noble animal's heart burst and he staggered and fell, throwing his rider, who broke his neck. But Goddard walked—up the hurrying Strand and Fleet Street, through the fast-emptying City; eastwards, up Fenchurch Street, the Whitechapel Road, Mile End Road, jostling through the crowded thoroughfares that reeked with the odour of fried-fish, naphtha from costers' barrows, and the day's sweat of the toiling population; down Whitehouse Lane and Stepney High Street on to Ratcliffe Highway. The squalor and misery of it all touched the ever-responsive chord in his nature, awoke the demagogue in him to sympathy with the people. The East End had never appeared to him so terrible, so crushing in its vast unloveliness. Mile after mile it was just the same—the same stench, the same

stunted men; the same anemic girl-mothers; the same foul, fringed, and feathered women of the street; the same bestial talk that seemed to hang continuously on the air; the same scenes of drunken brawling outside the public-houses; the same dreamy, endless tram-cars, smoothly gliding past this hubbub and swelter of humanity on the pavement; and everywhere the same joyless struggle for the four sole ends of life—food, raiment, shelter, and forgetfulness.

Goddard felt a strange and stern comfort in steeping his soul in these wide waters of bitterness. He went on and on, through brawling companies of sailors, swarthy Lascars, and the land-scum that clings round the seafaring life; past evil-smelling marine stores, live-stock dealers dissonant with the screeching of parrots, slop-shops, low eating-houses, scented from afar, even through the general stench, by the miasmic exhalations from basement gratings. At the end of the Highway he turned, retraced his steps, went through the foul river-side slums, crossed the Commercial Road, struck northwards, up dark, narrow streets, where the flare and turmoil of the great arteries were perceived but faintly, and the minor privacies of life were in sordid evidence. Through streets of sweaters' dens he could see the vague forms of the workers behind the blindless windows. Once he stopped and counted—thirty in one small, gas-lit room.

To carry on the combat with the powers of evil that enthralled this hideous city, his life

needed little reconstruction. He thought of Lady Phayre, clenched his stick, and swung it furiously.

"I'll go on with my work, and she can go to the devil!" he said.

And he walked on through the endless streets.

It is a simple way to rid ourselves of burdens, to consign them to Avernus, and ship them on the waters of Lethe. Unfortunately it is not always successful. They are apt to be elusive, like the vampire in the Indian story which Vikram could not keep in his sack. They slip from the hold of the dark ship, and return to the shoulders of the consigner. But in this Goddard's pride allowed no confession of failure. He blustered himself into the belief that Lady Phayre was no more to him than Hecuba was to the First Player, thus playing the hypocrite to himself with morose and stubborn futility. He plunged into his work with redoubled energy, grew angry when he found that it did not give him the old sufficing happiness, and obstinately refused to allow the simple, obvious cause.

And then the new element of discord in his life had to be accepted and harmonised. Lizzie was going from bad to worse. He brought Emily to live in the house to take permanent charge of her. Together they tried to mitigate the evil, to circumvent her in her plans for obtaining drink; but she was more than their equal in cunning. The disease had laid its everlasting grasp upon her. She sank daily in degradation. Daniel

could not cheat himself into the fancy of freedom from this burden of loathing. Yet he was a man with a keen sense of justice. The more his heart revolted, the more doggedly did he repress outward manifestation. He bore her reproaches silently, strove to render her lot less bitter.

"I believe you're an angel from heaven, Daniel," said Emily once. She always had looked up to him with reverential adoration. "How you can put up with her I don't know. You're a living angel if ever there was one."

"You think so, do you, Em?" he answered with a rough laugh, rather touched. "Well, go on thinking so. It won't do me any harm."

Only once did Lizzie refer to the night of Lady Phayre's visit. It was a Sunday evening. Emily had gone to church, and had left the two together in the drawing-room. Daniel was smoking a pipe over a book, and Lizzie was engaged with some needlework—a rare occupation. She had been less fretful that day, had even asked him to sit with her. Gradually, as Daniel read, her efforts with her needle became spasmotic. There were intervals of gazing into the fire, and sudden resumptions of industry. Then she rose, moved about the room, idly examining nicknacks and fidgeting with furniture. At last she left the room, and entered her bedroom that adjoined.

Suddenly Daniel's attention was arrested by a sharp tinkling sound. He started to his feet and went quickly to join Lizzie. It was as he had suspected. By the half-light of the dim-burning

gas he saw her thrusting a bottle beneath some garments in a trunk. A glass half full of spirits was close by on the mantelpiece.

"Lizzie! How can you?" he cried.

She turned upon him in a fury.

"How dare you come in here! How dare you spy upon me! If I want to drink I'll drink. What business is it of yours if I kill myself?"

She seized the glass, had already put it to her lips, when he strode forward and dashed it from her hand.

"You won't do it to-night anyhow, Lizzie," he said calmly.

She broke into a torrent of angry speech.

When the drink or passion was upon her, she used the vernacular of the Sunington streets—of her own home, for the matter of that. He waited until there was a lull in the tempest.

"I'll have the bottle anyway," he said, turning to the trunk.

But that was the signal for a fresh outburst. She sat upon the trunk, swore he should never have it while she lived, prepared to defend her property by physical means. Goddard shrugged his shoulders, and sat down upon the bed.

"All right," he said; "I'll wait."

Then she burst into hysterical sobbing. She wished she was dead. She hated him. He was a brute. That was all he lived for—to keep the spy upon her when he wasn't making up to other women.

"Do you think I'm a fool?" she cried, suddenly taking her hands from her face and turning to him. "Do you think I don't know? I don't interfere with you: why should you interfere with me? Only don't bring your women to this house. Do you think I don't know your goings on? You are worse than I am. I don't pretend. You are a dirty blackguard. You think I don't know all about your Rhodanthes and things?"

He started as if she had struck him, for a moment lost the command over himself that he had maintained through all the ordure of words. He regained it with a violent effort, clutching the counterpane fiercely, until his finger-nails were turned back. He understood now how a man could beat a woman. If he lost the hold over himself, he would rush to her and beat her —beat her until she lay senseless. Perhaps she almost expected it, for she paused at the last words, and looked at him half-coweringly, half-defiantly. So their eyes remained fixed on one another in the dim-lit room. Then she shuddered with body and lips, and uttering a low cry hid her face. A terror had taken possession of her. She was conquered.

Daniel rose from the bed, went to her, and took her by the arm.

"Go into the next room," he said sternly, and she obeyed.

He joined her after he had disposed of the disputed whisky-bottle. And there they sat in

an appalling silence, until Emily came back from church, and relieved him of his charge.

That was the last time that Lizzie referred to Lady Phayre. He wondered how she had learned her name—that name Rhodanthe, which he had ever in his mind—which, save this once, he had never heard uttered aloud. It was a curious freak of fate's irony that, on this one occasion, it should have been uttered by his wife's lips. The circumstance embittered him still more against her.

A few weeks after this the long-expected vacancy in the Hough division occurred, and Goddard was definitely chosen as the Radical candidate. In the very beginning of his electoral campaign he received news from London that the terrible drink illness had fallen upon his wife.

CHAPTER XII

A LEADER OF MEN

"Do you think it wise for me to go in?" asked Goddard.

"She has been asking for you," said the nurse.
"It may do her good; but don't speak to her."

"Then she has definitely turned the corner."

"Yes; at last. But her recovery depends upon absolute quiet. It is the heart now. A sudden excitement, and then"—she snapped her fingers—"syncope."

"That is to say—sudden death."

"Of course," said the nurse.

"I shall merely sit by her side for ten minutes," said Daniel. "You are sure it will please her?"

"It will be a sign of forgiveness," said the nurse. She sighed. "Ah! poor thing! I'll go and prepare her."

Goddard sat down wearily in the stiffly furnished drawing-room to await his summons, and rested his head in his hands. He was very tired. The strain, mental and physical, of the past three months had told upon him. His face was worn and yellow, and his eyes were rather too bright for health. A strange thing for him, he had been driven to seek medical

advice for insomnia. The prescription was immediate rest and change. He shrugged his shoulders. After the election, perhaps.

Intense political feeling prevailed in the division. Goddard's influence was such as to leave none lukewarm. The conflict was raging fiercely. One of the heaviest polls on record was anticipated. The strain of candidature would have been great in ordinary circumstances. Coming as it did upon an already over-worked man, it was dangerous. And then there was Lizzie's illness. He had already come to town several times to satisfy himself that all was being done for her that money and skill could accomplish. It had been a matter of feverish anxiety lest any act of omission on his part should endanger her recovery.

He sat with his head in his hands, staring at the pattern of the carpet, too tired to think coherently. To-morrow was polling day. He would have to get back that evening. By the registers he ought to get in. "Daniel Goddard, M.P." — a name to conjure with in a few years' time. And yet there was something missing. He knew what it was only too well. It might have been. He would have seen her in Hough to-morrow—eager, radiant, driving about the polling-booths, wearing his colours. And if he won—the joy of standing before her in his victory! But the other picture rose up before him. All through the election he had been haunted by the two women. He had wrestled

with passionate desires. One night, when news had come that Lizzie lay between life and death, a horrible, overwhelming longing that she might die had kept him awake till the morning, when he rose and took the first train to town, to assure himself that no stone was being left unturned in order to save her. He remembered now some of Emily's descriptions of the horrors of that bed-side, and he shivered. Thank God it was over. She wanted to see him. Perhaps this might mark a change in their lives. He wondered whether she knew anything of the election. Perhaps she might take a pride in being the wife of a Member of Parliament. But what good could it do her? It would not bring fresh interests into her life. Yes, it was hopeless. Any common woman in the street would be as fit a companion for him. And again the longing for the companionship he had lost came upon him, and his thoughts, in his weary mood, lingered over the witchery of her odd name—Rhodanthe.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr. Goddard," said the nurse, coming in. "There were some odds and ends to do in the room. You'll be very, very quiet, won't you?"

"You are sure there is no danger?" asked Goddard.

The nurse smiled at his insistence.

"Don't speak to her or make her talk. That is all," she said.

Goddard entered the sick-room on tiptoe. At the door Emily met him on her way out, and

whispered a caution not to stay too long. He went to the bedside. Lizzie was lying very still and white. The flesh had left her cheeks; they were pinched, her features sharp, the skin drawn away tight against the bones. Her colourless lips hung loose; her teeth were prominent—a death's head rather than a living woman. Goddard was shocked to the heart. He scarcely recognised her. Not only did he fail to see in her any traces of the girl he had once thought to love, but also she was no longer the woman he had hated.

"So you've come," she whispered, moving a feeble hand.

He took it in his, tried to smile to reassure her. Her lips moved again.

"Won't you kiss me?"

Her voice had not changed. It lessened the strange sense of unfamiliarity with which he had been regarding her. There was an involuntary touch of peevishness in the tone. He bent down and kissed her cheek.

"Make haste and get well, Lizzie," he said in a low voice.

She seemed satisfied with this, for she half closed her eyes, and let her hand slip from his on to the counterpane. Daniel sat down in the chair facing the small table by the bedside, on which were a bottle of medicine and glass, a bunch of violets in water, and her Bible. This last was a beautifully bound volume, edged with brass, and closed with a heavy clasp. Daniel had given it to her in the early days of their marriage, when

she was eager to surround herself with all the obvious essentials of gentility. He had learned lately from Emily's chatter how she had insisted upon this Bible being placed near her. "As if the Holy Book could charm away the other things," Emily had said in an awed tone.

The sight of it carried his thoughts back. Only once before had he sat by her side like this—in this very room, too. She had been very white and still then, but young and fresh, with gladness in her eyes that had awakened within him an answering thrill. And there had been a little wee pink thing at her breast. It had fluffy black down on its head, he remembered. In this room, too, it had died three years later of diphtheria. The room's associations grew upon him. It was here that he had first come by the knowledge of the curse of her life. She was lying speechless one evening on the bed. He had bent over her unsuspectingly, and then started back with a horrible spasm of disgust. Involuntarily now he raised his head and looked at her. Her eyes were open, staring at the ceiling. His fancy seemed to read in them the lingering horrors through which she had passed. He shuddered, thanked God that the child had died. The hereditary poison must have lurked in its young veins.

To shake off these thoughts he rose, stirred the fire into a blaze, and returned to his seat. Then, moved by compunction—for this was a visit of forgiveness—he stretched out his arm and smoothed the back of her hand. A look of gratefulness

appeared on her face, and she closed her eyes again. Daniel's heart softened a little towards her.

The minutes passed slowly. He grew restless, wished that the nurse or Emily would come and relieve him. A sick-room, where one has to sit perfectly still, is not the place for a man suffering from nervous excitement. His eyes fell again on the Bible. He had not seen his gift for years. There was a certain pathos in her desire to have it near her.

He took it up, undid the clasp, and looked at the fly-leaf. "To my dear wife." He sighed. He had tried to delude himself in those days that he loved her. Could he ever write such an inscription again? He shook his head, as the ever-haunting face of the other woman came between his eyes and the leaf. He turned the pages. They fell open, naturally, where a letter had been placed. The back of the envelope was turned to him. He thought it was one of his own to his wife, and felt touched by the idea of her keeping it there. He took it up curiously, but as his glance fell on the address he started with great amazement. It was in Lady Phayre's handwriting—bore only his name. It had been opened. He himself surely had never received such a letter. With heart furiously beating and trembling fingers, he drew out the enclosure.

"Go, my hero and leader of men, to your victory. And if you love me, come back to me for your reward—whatsoever your heart desireth.

"RHODANTHE."

For a few moments he remained staring at the paper, unable to comprehend. Then the truth crashed down upon him—both the letter's significance and the probable history of its miscarriage. His brain reeled. She loved him. The note of passion in the words drowned his senses like a great diapason. She loved him. But for this other woman she would be his. He rose from his chair, turning his back to his wife, and put his hand to his forehead. His instinct was to fly from her presence. The smouldering hatred had sprung into fierce flame. He made a few steps by the foot of the bed, then stopped and looked at her. Their eyes met. He saw that she had been following his movements from the time he had first opened the Bible. A wave of gathering madness clouded his brain, surged red before his eyes. Remaining sanity bade him rush from the room if she was to live. An explosion of his passion would kill her. But the expression of excitement and fear on her peaked, livid face read in his disordered brain as one of mocking triumph. It swept away the lingering self-control. He strode round to her side, lifted his arms above his head, clenching the letter and shaking with passion, let loose all the fury in his soul in a low, hoarse cry.

Lizzie rose to a sitting posture, gazed at him for a moment, an awful terror in her eyes, and then, with a gasp, fell back on her pillow—dead.

How long he stood there, as if petrified, he never knew. When he recovered reason he wiped

the great drops of perspiration from his forehead, thrust the letter into his pocket, and rushed from the room.

“Emily! Nurse!” he shouted from the top of the landing; and when they appeared hurriedly from the dining-room, “Come up at once: I think Lizzie is dead.”

The women ran up the stairs.

“Go to her. I will fetch Dr. Carson,” he cried, brushing past them.

He caught up a hat from the hall, and in another moment was out of doors. This pretext for absence and solitude was an inspiration. She was dead. He was free. He had killed her. He did not notice that an icy, heavy rain was sweeping the streets. He had killed her for Rhodanthe. Rhodanthe was his: he had bought her with his soul. He bit his lips to prevent himself from crying aloud. The rare passers-by turned round scared at his wild face and furious gait.

The calm of the doctor’s waiting-room was a check, and allowed him to concentrate his scattered faculties. When the medical man appeared, alert and matter of fact, he was master of himself. He explained his errand. He had been sitting with his wife, had idly reached for her Bible by the bedside. She had sprang up to prevent him. The exertion had killed her. He had looked through the Bible, found a letter written to him which she had guarded through jealousy. The explanation was simple and satisfactory, yet he felt deadly faint.

"You are upset," said Dr. Carson, who had known him for several years. "You have been burning the candle at both ends lately. Drink this while I go and put on my coat." He poured him out a glass of brandy, which he took from a cupboard. Goddard gulped it down neat. The spirit saved him from the threatening collapse and braced his nerves.

He accompanied the doctor to his own house in silence, left him at the dining-room door to go upstairs to the bedroom, and entering, sat down to wait. When the doctor returned, it was with a great effort that Goddard compelled himself to look him in the eyes.

"I am afraid your wife is dead," said the doctor gravely.

"And I am indirectly the cause," said Goddard.

The other moved a deprecating hand. "Don't let that add to your sadness. Any other chance accident might have done it. Besides, may I speak to you frankly?"

"By all means."

"Then—if it will not pain you—it is better so."

"Would she never have recovered?"

"Her health was shattered. In all probability she would have broken out again. She and you have been spared some years of certain misery."

"Then I have done a good action from a philosophical point of view?" said Goddard, with a harsh laugh.

"If you put it that way, you have," replied the doctor, somewhat stiffly.

"Look here, Carson," cried Goddard excitedly. "I can't tell you that I am grieved she had gone. Don't expect me to play the hypocrite."

"I expect nothing but the misfortune of having you upon my hands in a short time," said the other.

"Then let me speak to you once and for all—as a medical man: I must speak to somebody. These last few weeks I have been in hell fire. I hated her. I wanted her to die. I used to wake up at nights wet through with sweat, through the terror of it. I have been to blame throughout from the first cursed day I married her. I didn't love her; she didn't care much for me. I had to go my way: she couldn't follow me. How could she? She was left alone here all by herself—no company, no occupations—nothing. You know her history—her father. The drink was in her blood. I tried to save her—after my fashion. You, who have attended her for the last eight years, can bear me out. But we were strangers—not an impulse in common. Latterly—listen: I must tell some one once, or I shall go mad. I knew what a woman could be—what it was to want a woman passionately, madly. She came here one night, discovered I was married—saw my wife drunk in this room. Since then my wife has been like an incubus throttling me, dragging me down to damnation. And I wanted her to die. In that room upstairs, an hour ago, when I kissed her and forgave her, I wanted her to die. When

the moment came it was as though I had murdered her. Tell me, what am I to think? What am I to do?"

His features were working strangely, his brow damp with the black hair straggling across it. He looked at Carson with a searching appeal in his eyes. The latter took his hand, felt his pulse.

"What you are to do," he said, "is to go to bed at once and sleep. I'll send you round a draught. What you are to think, when you wake up, is that you are not responsible for her death—that she might have died at any moment, that it is better to die than to live a life of misery; that you are a free man, young, with all that makes life worth living in front of you. And lastly, if you like, that I have forgotten all you have told me. Now, go to bed and stay there."

"Impossible," cried Goddard. "The election."

"Damn the election!" said the doctor.

"I must go back to-day."

"And——?"

"I'll make the arrangements," replied Goddard with a shiver. "To-day is Tuesday. It will be for Friday. The poll will be declared at latest on Thursday morning. I must be there. Man alive!" he cried, with a queer tremor in his voice. "I cannot stay in this house! It would drive me mad. To sit here doing nothing—nothing—only thinking. I must go back. It will occupy

my mind. There are two women in this house—the dead one who is living, and the living one who is dead—has been dead to me. If ever action and stimulus have been necessary to me, they are imperative now. I must do it, man, I tell you—I must do it."

He began to walk about the room in a state of restless excitement, now and then moistening his lips with his tongue, and passing his hand through his hair. Dr. Carson reasoned with him. He was a young man, and felt himself powerless before Goddard's stronger personality. By virtue of mere professional prestige you cannot force a man to follow your prescriptions. Goddard impetuously swept aside his arguments. At last he stopped short, as if struck by a sudden inspiration.

"I tell you what, Carson, I'll promise to start at once for the south of France, as soon as this miserable business is over, and not do a stroke of work for a month."

"That's the only sensible thing you have said to-day," returned the other, more cheerily. "You'd better let me see you again before you go."

They parted. Goddard stumbled heavily upstairs to his own room, threw himself on the bed, and lay there, holding his burning head in his hands.

And Emily sat in the death-chamber and cried, the only soul on the wide earth who had love for

the poor, wrecked creature that was dead, for Sophie, her sister, had never had a word of good to say on Lizzie's behalf. She alone knew and pitied the miserable tragedy of that poor, futile life.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER

THE Paris-Lyons express was speeding through the darkness. It was intensely cold. The two other occupants of the carriage were shiveringly asleep beneath their rugs. But Goddard was awake, tinglingly awake, yet unconscious of external things.

He was passing through one of those rare epochs in life when a man feels himself to be master of his fate. Ever since he had seen the Dover Cliffs fading out of sight, and with them the last troubling impressions of a late graveside, he had been strung with a sense of invincibility. Nothing in his life that he had ardently desired had not been accomplished. He had but to will a thing, and it was done. He had conquered his position, step by step, with never a failure—his reputation as a popular leader, his responsible position in the Progressive League, his seat on the London County Council, his standing as an economic writer, his prestige at Ecclesby, and now his seat in Parliament. He had been returned by a triumphant majority. The victory intoxicated him—that and the elation of freedom. In his exalted mood he saw himself

lifted above the moral conventions of men. The death of his wife seemed a part of his destiny of victory. He had scarcely been responsible. Blind fate had helped him, as it had done hitherto.

And now he was on his way to the most glorious conquest of all. Every moment was bringing him nearer. To-morrow he would see Lady Phayre. His arms would be about her. She would yield herself to him. The new life would begin—great, glorious, wonderful. With her by his side there would be nothing impossible. The whole world should bless his name. He would make history. He would go down to posterity as the Great Demagogue.

She would put her white arms about his neck, and her lips would cling to his. When the thought came, a flash of passion irradiated the whole man.

He never doubted that he would win her. She loved him. The letter which he had read over a thousand times was overwhelming evidence. Her hurried flight from London also testified to the seriousness of the blow the discovery had been to her. He conjured up scenes and incidents in their past intercourse whose significance, unnoticed at the time, became sweetly plain in the light of his new knowledge. Nothing could stand in his way now. He was going to her, not a broken man humiliated with failure, as he had done on the last occasion he had sought her, but proud with name and fame, and the promise of great power in the land.

He had not written to her. His imagination was too much fired with the idea he had conceived of bursting upon her suddenly with the news of his freedom and with a passionate appeal. The vividness and excitement of the past few days had awakened the theatrical element in his nature—the dramatic instinct that lies in the nature of any great orator and leader of men.

“Lyons, dix minutes d’arrêt !”

Goddard left the compartment to stretch his legs. The great station loomed vast in the darkness of the mid-January morning. The tapping of the wheels echoed ghostly in the stillness. Only a few muffled forms had braved the cold, and were stamping their feet on the platform, or hurrying to the dimly lit buffet for the morning coffee. Nothing more delicious than this in the sweet spring dawn, but at five o’clock in mid-winter it requires an effort to leave the snugness of the compartment. To Goddard the journey was half dream, half delight. The great train, standing, to his English eyes, monstrously high above the rails, seemed some strange engine appointed by fate to his service. It seemed symbolic of the irresistible force that he had at his command.

When the train started again he tried to sleep, but his brain was too excited. He had not slept for three nights. Yet the feelings of prostration that had come upon him just before Lizzie’s death had passed away, giving place to one of

intense vitality. Every fibre in his body was alive. Sleep was scarcely necessary. Only a shooting pain now and then in his head made him start and pass his hand impatiently across his forehead. The train thundered on through the darkness, and Goddard remained awake, possessed by the passionate intensity of his fixed idea. He watched the day dawn, bright and glorious. At Avignon the world was bathed in sunshine. It was an omen of happiness. At Marseilles it was hot. All along that beautiful coast Goddard's heart glowed within him. The deep-coloured sea, the flowers, the light, the joyousness of the south filled his senses with the wonder of a new world. His silent companions got out at Toulon, and three swarthy Gascons took their place, and talked with rich deep voices and extravagant gestures until they reached Carnoules, their destination. Goddard missed their whole-hearted laughter when they had gone.

The day wore on. Cannes at four o'clock. In a few moments he would be in Nice. He drew once more the letter from his pocket, rested his eyes on the few words a long, long time. "Whatsoever your heart desireth—Rhodanthe." He looked out at the deep blue water meeting the violet sky. Rhodanthe! The name was strangely in harmony with this exotic beauty. Before the night was over he would call her by it. She would be his. Together they would conquer the world.

He stepped on to the platform at Nice like a king coming to take possession of a new realm. He looked around, as if he should see Lady Phayre awaiting him, and then smiled at the fancy. The hotel porter took his luggage to the Hôtel Terminus, the nearest. He was feverishly anxious to set out on his quest of her without loss of time. A quarter of an hour sufficed him to wash and make himself presentable, and then he went out into the Avenue de la Gare. At another time he would have loved to walk down the beautiful boulevard, bright with shops and cafés and gaily coloured kiosques; but now the supreme hour of his life had come, and the great thoroughfare became blurred as in a dream. He hailed a cab, gave the address "Hôtel des Anglais" to the driver, and sat bolt upright all the way, in an agony of impatience. He had no eyes now for the sea as he emerged on to the Promenade des Anglais; but he scanned the long line of palace-hotels, wondering which was Lady Phayre's. The cab stopped by the public gardens. Goddard looked up. It was the Hôtel des Anglais. He threw a piece of money to the cabman, and entered.

The frock-coated, brass-buttoned porter approached him in polite inquiry.

"I want to see Lady Phayre," said Goddard.

"I am afraid, sir," replied the man, "that Lady Phayre has gone away this very morning."

"Gone away?" asked Goddard, looking at him blankly. "Where to?"

"Ah, that I cannot say," said the porter.

And then he added, with the benevolent smile of his class—

"Perhaps you have not heard, sir, that there is no longer such a person as Lady Phayre."

"What?" cried Goddard. "What do you mean?"

"Only that Madame was married this morning. It was to a Monsieur Gleam. I believe he is a member of Parliament. He has been staying in the hotel."

Goddard stared at him with a ghastly face. He turned slowly and went down the hotel steps. He staggered a few yards. Then the sea, and the trees, and the great white palaces mingled together in a whirling circle, and disappeared in the blackness of night. Something in his brain seemed to snap, and he fell an inert mass on the pavement.

For weeks he lay ill. He recovered to wish that he had died. Despair overwhelmed him. His crime haunted him waking and sleeping. In his bodily prostration he seemed to hear the mocking laughter of the fiend that had prompted it. With the torture of remorse was paradoxically mingled impotent anger at the cynicism of fate. His soul sickened at the futility of things. He shrank with shuddering dismay from the ordeal that lay before him. There were

times when death beckoned to him with tempting hands.

But men of Goddard's stamp survive the shipwreck of their happiness. They live on, and go about the world's work doggedly, stubbornly, blindly obeying the fighting instinct within them. The great tragedies of the soul culminate not in death, but in dragging years of life, when the grasshopper is a burden and desire fails. And such is the end of Daniel Goddard's tragedy. He lives to-day. His name is a household word. He is the coming man, not of a party-clique, but of a nation. He has sat upon the Treasury Bench. In the next Liberal Administration he will hold Cabinet rank. He is envied, courted, flattered. The wildest ambitions of his boyhood are in course of certain fulfilment. But he has lost for ever the joy of victory; the springs of happiness are for ever closed by the one overwhelming defeat of his life.

He is on the best of terms with Aloysius Gleam, and attends his wife's dinner-parties. Between them the past has only once been referred to, and that silently. It was the first time he found himself alone with her, one evening after dinner, Gleam having been summoned from the drawing-room. Their eyes met for an embarrassing moment. Then Goddard drew the familiar letter from his pocket-book, held it out for a few seconds so as to catch her eye, and threw it into the fire. She watched it blaze, and gave two or three little nods of acknowledgment. Then, being in

a comfortable chair, a bewitching costume, and a considerably relieved frame of mind, she allowed the moisture to gather in her eyes. But neither spoke until Gleam returned with a sprightly saying on his lips. He threw himself into a chair.

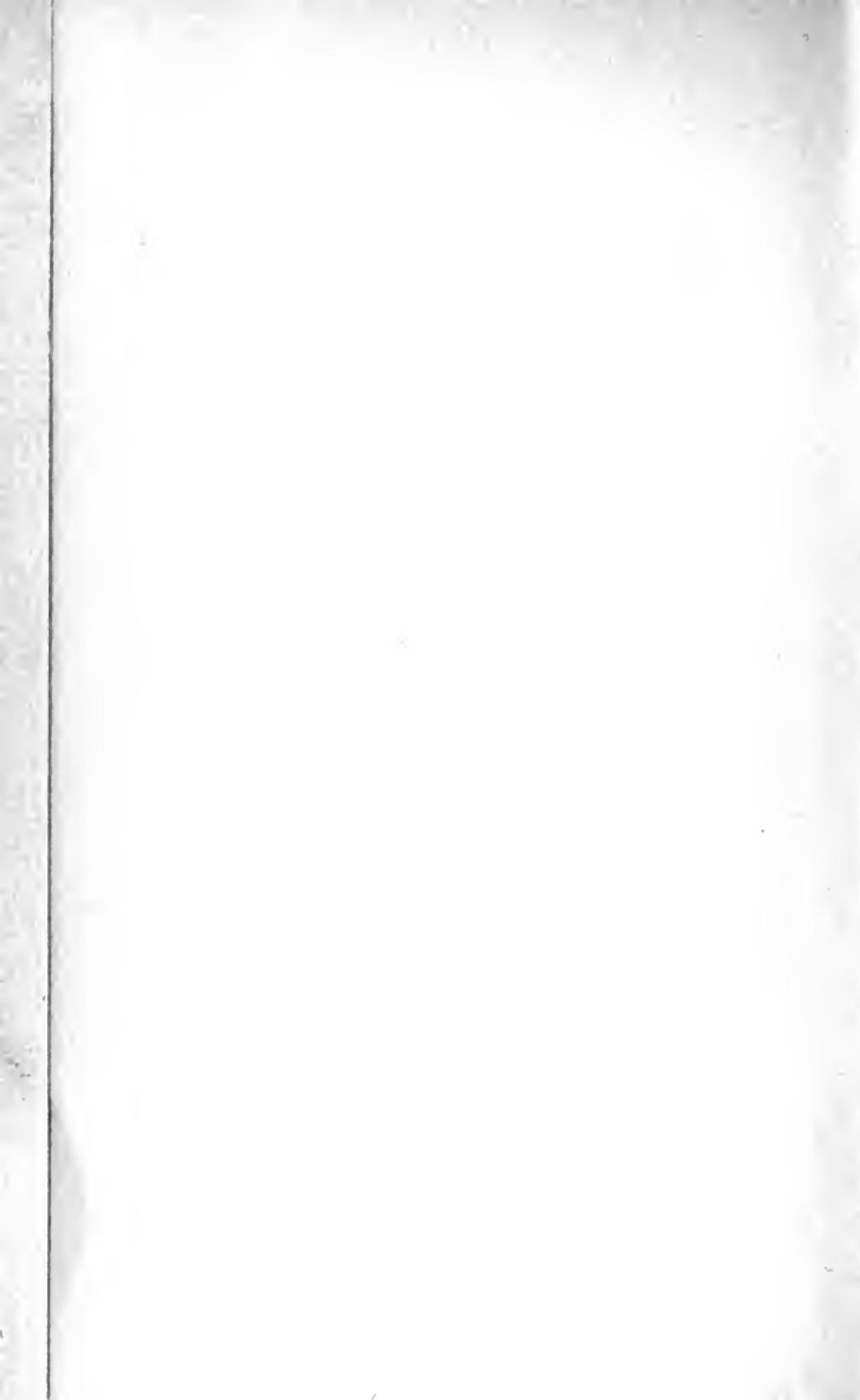
"An old servant has just been to return me a sovereign she once stole. It weighed on her conscience. I asked her about a certain diamond pin. She looked haggard, and fled incontinently. Verily, all is for the funniest in this funniest of all possible worlds."

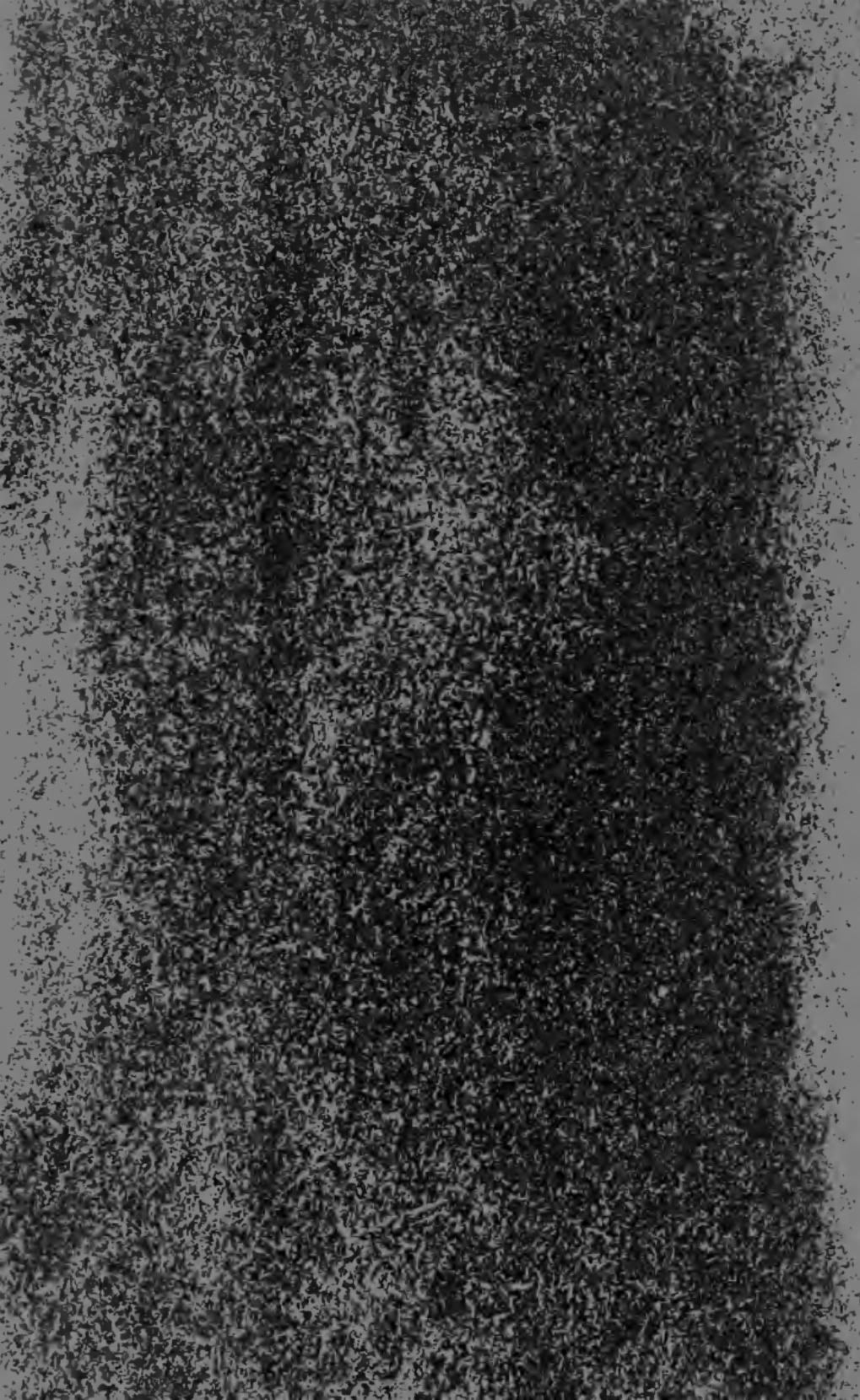
Rhodanthe broke into her silvery laugh. Goddard joined in grimly and looked at her. For desire of her he had committed murder. He was laughing and jesting with her husband and herself. Gleam was right. It was the most humorous of worlds.

Then his mind went back to the terrible moment of his life, and his heart gave a great heave, and his lips moved noiselessly.

"God, forgive me!"

THE END







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